SECTION 1 — The Media

1.1 News and the Press

The term press refers to all types of news-gathering organizations and their employees, but you'll hear other terms — news media, journalists, reporters — used almost interchangeably. The simple truth is this: no news organization cares about the label as much as the content. If you issue a news release or hold a news conference, you must have real news. If you have no news this time, you'll have no news coverage next time.

If you're cracking open this guide for the first time because your park is in a crisis, shame on you. Keep going, of course, because we think there's good stuff in the pages that follow. But the time to think about a public affairs program, relationships with local or national news media, take a look at the Internet or talk to interest groups is long before a crisis. You'll still have serious incidents and lots of news media attention over the years, but if you've done your relationship building before the trouble hits, life will be easier. Really.

If you're just starting to build that relationship with the media, pay attention to how they do their job. It's the only way to understand what they do and how you might work well with them. Over the next several pages, we'll first introduce you to some of the ways reporters work, and ways that your working relationship with them can be improved. We'll also spend considerable space on writing, because regardless of the final form in which news comes to the public, it usually starts with the written word.

1.2 Who's Who and What Do They Do

There are three traditional media — print (newspapers and magazines), radio and television. The newest medium is the Internet, combining aspects of all three of its forerunners. Because each medium has its own strengths and weaknesses in terms of the kinds of stories it tells and the kinds of audiences it attracts, each has its own needs.

You look at television. It's color, movement, sound, and it's usually brief. Therefore, television wants pictures with action and a pithy story.

You listen to the radio, and radio news stories are sometimes done in considerable depth. Therefore, radio wants voices and sound and may be able to cover quite complicated stories.

You read newspapers and magazines. They want information that can be presented well in writing and in graphics such as charts or photographs. The print media can handle many more details than broadcasters, although the trend at many newspapers is to run shorter stories than in the past.

The Internet is a mixed bag. Many on-line news services are simply the electronic version of stories that have appeared in print or have been broadcast. Internet services can make pictures, sound and video available, and they can "publish" in the same short time frame that you're used to with broadcasters.

1.3 The Written Word Still Rules

The telephone is no substitute for the written word. In every medium, and for every story, someone does the hard work of recording the facts. Reporters and editors in the news media will have the final say on what an article or broadcast says, but you can (and should in most cases) provide written information to the reporter.

Why? Because a reporter often covers several stories in a day. The reporter's expertise and background may have nothing to do with your park issues, and with unfamiliar topics it's hard to learn the key facts and write them down at the same time. The more you can put in writing — in the form of a press release, a fact sheet, an executive summary of a large document — the less chance there is your words will be accidentally misreported. You'll still spend considerable time on the phone with reporters, but offer to send the key information in writing via fax or e-mail. Reporters will rarely turn you down.

Writing down key facts — especially numbers and statements that need to be carefully worded — will help you organize your thoughts, too, even if you just use the page to refer to during an interview. Putting information in writing also gives you a record of what you've said, and — assuming you can find the paper or computer file — might come in handy for future interviews.

1.4 Preparing News Releases

First, make sure you're the right person to be putting out the news release. Is the subject matter something more appropriate for the regional director to release? Or the Director?

Having answered that question correctly, remember that editors of newspapers and magazines and broadcast assignment editors have very large trash cans where most news releases die. Those of us who in other lives have filled those baskets day after day offer you the following guidelines on how to avoid the can.

Here are the key elements of a good news release:

- **Newsworthiness**. No news is bad news.
- **Audience.** Don't send a release of purely local concern to a distant media outlet. A journal of historical research won't care about new traffic patterns at the park.
- **A good lead.** The lead is the first paragraph; if it isn't well done, it may be the last paragraph the editor reads.
- **Good writing.** Smaller publications have less staff to write or rewrite material. If your release is well-written, it may be printed with little editing. If it needs great effort to rescue it, there's a good chance it will go to the trash.
- **Art.** Photographs, charts, and video will help interest an editor, assuming the quality is good and you're offering it to the right audience. Tell editors what opportunities there are for their staff to produce art, too.

1.5 News Release Format

Even if your news release incorporates all of the above suggestions, it still needs to be presented in a professional, orderly manner. Here are the key format requirements and a sample news release.

A contact person (first and last name) should be named on every news release. The person should be readily available and able to answer questions on the subject of the release. Include a telephone, fax and e-mail address.

Date. Always put a date on a press release. If it can be used at anytime, put "For Immediate Release." In rare circumstances, you might use a future date or time, for instance, "For Release Thursday, June 27," or more specifically, "For Release at 9 a.m., Thursday, June 27." Try to avoid future release dates or embargoes. They have certain uses, such as giving out the text of a speech in advance of an event, but remember you can't restrict the use of information that's available from another source. Also, reporters generally hate getting "embargoed" information. Why? Because most don't believe that you're not slipping it without the same conditions to a competitor, or they don't trust their competitors to delay a good story. Suffice it to say, embargoed stories are often a mess.

Headline. Just like a newspaper, every news release gets a headline. Use Bold Face Capitals to set if off from the body of the story. A good headline is a pithy synopsis of the key point of a story. It does not take the place of part of the story, so repeat the headline information in the body of the story. Good headlines are not easy to write. In the appropriate circumstance, humor is a great attention getter. Poorly handled, you've embarrassed the Service, so think hard before you decide to get funny.

The News Release Text. A consistent format lends professionalism to your operation and to the Service. It's an excellent goal, but in reality gets bent by all of us who send news releases. Here's what we aim for in the format of the story:

Indent all paragraphs. This is different than government letter writing style.

Keep it short. News releases are the wrong vehicles for long, flowery writing. At best, and editor will throw out the flowers and keep the facts. At worst, the release just gets dumped.

Leave room for editing. Double space the text, use wide margins and use one side of the page, even if you need to use more than one page. Use short paragraphs. You're not saving paper if the news release goes straight to the trash!

Take care with spelling and grammar. You're a professional managing one of the crown jewels. What does it say about our care of resources if we can't run spell check or use a dictionary?

Invest in real press release stationery. It's cheap, adds to the professional image, and if you consistently deliver good news stories via your letterhead, you'll gain a reputation as mail worth reading.

Exhibit 1: Sample News Release

NEWS RELEASE
National Park Service

Office of Communications • Washington, DC 20240 • www.nps.gov

For Release: December 11, 1997

Program Contact: Patty Henry (202) 343-8163
Public Affairs: Jacqui Handly (202) 208-4989

SECRETARY BABBITT DESIGNATES 16 NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

On December 9, 1997, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt announced the designation of sixteen properties in eleven states and one U.S. territory as National Historic Landmarks. The newly designated landmarks range from the private retreat home of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to three "stations" on the Underground Railroad. They also include a Selma, Alabama church that was a focal point of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, a Spanish-American war shipwreck, and two properties significant in United States labor history, as well as many other notable historic places. Landmarks commemorate and represent the history and culture of the United States.

National Historic Landmarks are identified by theme and special studies prepared or overseen by National Park Service historians and archeologists. Landmark designation is the Federal Government's official recognition of the national importance of historic properties.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to recognize historic places judged to have exceptional value to the nation. Once the Secretary designates a National Historic Landmark, its owner is presented with a bronze plaque bearing the name of the landmark and attesting to its national significance. Owners of landmarks receive technical advice and assistance from preservation experts when requested.

Attached is a description of the sixteen newly designated sites.

- NPS -

1.6 What Makes Good Writing

News people are used to getting written news releases, either by mail, fax or e-mail. They regularly rewrite them to conform to their style and story length requirements. They don't mind if your composition isn't a prize winner, but they do mind not getting all the facts. This section covers a mix of advice on writing style.

The first paragraph is a summary of what the release is about. It's called the "lead." These first few lines, seldom more than three, determine if your release sinks or swims.

> The Coronado International Historical Pageant, depicting Hispanic and Indian culture of the Southwest, will be presented free to the public from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday (April 20) at Coronado National Memorial in Hereford.

This is a routine lead. But notice that it answers all the important questions: **who, what, why, where** and **when**. If answering those basics takes too many words, do one of two things: Break your text into two or more sentences, or leave detailed information for later in the release. Here are two versions:

> **WRONG:** Three mountaineers, two from California and one from England, were killed in separate avalanches on Mount McKinley Tuesday night, while three others from France were injured and rescued by the National Park Service after a third incident this morning, mountain rescue rangers at Denali National Park and Preserve reported.

Whew! Just try reading it aloud with one breath and you'll see you're in trouble. The next version is better:

> **BETTER:** Three Mount McKinley climbers have died in avalanches and three other mountaineers are safe after being rescued by rangers in Denali National Park and Preserve.
>
> Two California climbers died in an avalanche on the Orient Express on Tuesday at about 8 p.m. Thirty minutes later, a third climber from England died in a second, nearby avalanche. The rescue of three French climbers came today at about 9 a.m. after the group fell an estimated 120 feet at Denali Pass.

When there are simply too many facts going on at once, but they are all related, you need to break it out piece by piece. It won't win any writing awards, but you will win friends among journalists by being very clear about what happened in each instance. While the fictional example is from climbing, any park with widespread flooding, multiple fires or simultaneous law enforcement troubles will recognize the pattern.

Newspapers and wire services have a writing style that's different from the government.

In the reference section in the back of this guide, we've listed some reference materials. They are worth the money to have on your desk, but here, for free, are a few rules to remember:

• **Use the full proper name of a person, or of a thing, only once.** For instance, Superintendent Anne Castellina on first reference and Castellina on subsequent references. Kenai Fjords National Park on first reference, and "the park" or "Kenai Fjords" on second references. Don't use our four-letter words such as KEFJ, YELL or WASO. Most publications only use abbreviations for very common things like FBI or AFL-CIO.

• **Most publications do not use courtesy titles. You shouldn't either.** So it's Horace Albright on first reference, and Albright (not Mr. Albright) on subsequent references. The exception is when saying Miss, Mr., or Mrs. (Ms. only if that is the known preference of the subject) will prevent confusion when several people have the same last name.

• **If you need to identify a medical doctor, then "Dr." is appropriate.** Folks with PhDs don't get to use Dr. (although you may want to note that a person has an advanced degree if it's relevant to the story).

• **Formal titles are capitalized** (Superintendent Mike Finley), **but lower case if they follow the name** (Mike Finley, superintendent). Titles are lower case if used without a name (The superintendent will speak at noon.)

• **Spell out numbers nine and below and use numerals for numbers 10 or greater. Ages are always numerals.**

• **Don't say 11 a.m. in the morning. When else could it be?** It's either 11 a.m. (best) or 11 o'clock in the morning (not as good.) To avoid confusion, use noon and midnight and not 12 a.m. or 12 p.m. Publications of general interest don't use military time.

1.7 Photographs and Captions

Good illustrations, especially photographs, are in high demand, especially among smaller publications. Larger publications may use your photographs, and even broadcasters may be interested in seeing what their camera crew will find.

You can send pictures with every release, or add an "Editor's Advisory" at the end of the news release describing what's available on film or video. Another option is scanning an image, printing it and including it with your release as a sample of what the news outlet can find when a crew comes to Backwater National Monument. Quality should be your guide — a muddy or blurry picture will hurt interest in your story.

Every publication on the planet uses pictures of people shaking hands. Not a single one of them likes doing it, but they run over and over because there's often nothing better. If you have a check presentation or a groundbreaking, think hard to give them something better than a line of people holding a giant check or standing there in suits holding shovels.

Now that you're thinking images, what format should you pursue? A few suggestions:

• **Photographs are not snapshots.** Don't use prints from instant cameras; get a real camera and have good prints made from 35mm film. Most wire services and papers can handle prints, negatives or slides in black and white or color. If you know you're shooting for a particular publication, check with the editor first.

• **Timeliness is important.** If you can get color prints in an hour or color slides in a week, your choice in most cases will be prints.

• **Television will accept video in a variety of formats, but they'll appreciate professional Beta or3/4-inch.** Hi-8mm also gives decent resolution. The trusty VHS format is the last choice. Video may also be distributed to news organizations and other parks (with downlink capabilities) via satellite. If feasible and financially practical it's a great way to distribute "B-roll video, video news releases, or broadcast an event live or on tape delay. Unless your incident is spectacularly newsworthy, most good television outlets won't want your video, although it may have many in-house uses. (See the Section 3 for more discussion.)

• **Write complete captions for every photo or video sequence distributed.** Remember these points when writing a caption:

- Never write a caption without seeing the picture
- Use complete names, spelled correctly.
- List names in an identifiable order (left to right, top to bottom, etc.)
- Fully identify the location and the time the picture was taken.
- Ask yourself, "Does it fully identify what's going on?"
- List a contact phone number on your caption. The press release and picture are likely to lead separate lives.

1.8 Distributing News Releases

The first rule of trash can avoidance is don't send trash. The second rule is don't bury your recipients in a paper or electronic blizzard. Use releases only when you have something worth taking an editor's time.

News release distribution used to be by mail or by hand. That's undergone a significant change in the last 10 years. Nevertheless, you've still got to figure out who gets the information and how. We'll assume that your audience is a fairly local one — that you're announcing new summer hours, not naming a new director.

Before you start compiling a media mailing list, do two things. First, make sure there isn't one already in the park — someone may have done the work for you. Second, check with your regional public affairs office. They often have media lists. Also, your local or state press club is likely to have a directory of publications and broadcasters. Many times these are commercially available.

If you are starting from scratch, and you don't already know, find out what newspapers are sold around your community. Include weeklies and "shoppers" if they run local news. Then turn on the radio and find out who's doing local news. Do the same for television, and don't forget local cable systems — the number of cable stations is huge, and many outlets run some local news or feature programs.

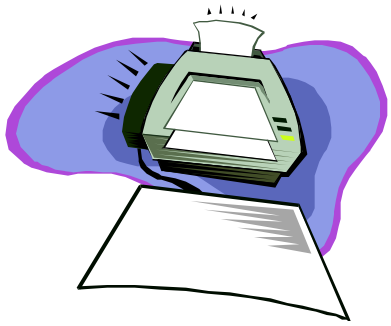
Next, compile a regional list. Make sure you've included the nearest wire service bureau offices, big city newspapers that might cover out of town issues (Denver papers for Rocky Mountain, San Francisco Bay area papers for Yosemite, etc.), regional magazines or specialty publications (military history publications for Civil War parks, for instance.)

Lastly, you'll want to have on hand the addresses for national or international media outlets that might have an interest. These might be national travel editors, magazines, or networks that you've worked with in the past or who have expressed an interest in your park.

If you want your mailing list to last a long time, you can mail the release to a job title, such as "City Editor," or "Assignment Editor." You may find you get more attention if you send it to a real person, however that takes time to make sure it's going to the right person. In real life, most mailing lists are a mix.

You are likely to build up three parallel "mailing" lists. There's the old one, with postal addresses, that will get a lot of use. You'll want a combination of a mailing list computer program, printer and mailing labels that work together; our only advice is to keep it simple.

Your second list will be fax numbers. Some reporters simply prefer getting information by fax, and in other cases you'll want the information out faster than the Post Office can work. If you don't have a fax machine that allows you to program all your common media phone numbers, make the investment. (Yes, you can fax material from your computer, but it's likely you'll need a good fax machine for material that for a variety of reasons you don't have as a computer file.) Put your regional public affairs officer on the fax list, too. They don't like surprises!



Nowadays, you're also going to build an e-mail list. A growing number of reporters like to get information by e-mail. It's undeniably fast to send (and equally fast to delete). And an e-mail release can be downloaded into a computer, letting the reporter bypass the re-typing step of a faxed or mail release. What's the downside of e-mail? Many reporters just aren't used to looking at e-mail frequently. Also, without a "return receipt" you're not sure anybody got it. And unlike a fax, where somebody is likely to pick up the piece of paper and see that there's news, e-mail can sit quietly for days.

Our advice? The same old song — talk to reporters and see how you can best work together. Use e-mail and faxes for the most timely information (accidents or other quickly changing material) and for information that you want all news outlets to have at the same time. Use the mail for less time-sensitive information (for instance, "Fall Museum Hours Begin Next Month")

Many parks put news releases on their World Wide Web sites. The national public affairs office does this, too. On the up side, this allows worldwide instant access to your information, saving you paper and mail costs. On the down side, few people really make a regular habit of checking the Web for, say, Poverty Point National Monument news releases.

Internet use is a fast-changing beast. Our advice is use your Web site to post press releases, current park conditions, and other information. Keep your press releases on park web

pages current. Old news releases should be archived or placed in such a manner so as not to imply that the park news release page has not been recently updated. If old releases are the first thing a user hits when accessing a park press release page it's unlikely that they'll return to that page as a source of current park information.

Let people know the information is there by adding a note describing your Web site on paper press releases and other publications. But don't stop the more traditional methods of communicating just yet.

1.9 Stock Information Needs

Your shelves can hold a variety of information materials at the ready that will help you work with the media and other groups. Here are four we recommend having:

• **The Fact Sheet.** A one-page sheet of basic information, done as a list of bullets. At a minimum, it will have the park's age, size, budget, visitation, staffing levels, contact name and number, and brief descriptions of the primary natural and/or cultural features. If a particular program has substantial public interest, such as flood repair on the C& O Canal, a separate sheet may be needed.

• **Photographs.** Keep a collection of color slides and black & white prints to help you work with many media outlets, especially smaller publishers. You do not need to have copies of every picture in the park's collection ready to give out — a representative sample of the key resources, including NPS personnel working with visitors, is what's needed. We recommend having good quality copies to give away for free; it's a small investment in telling the park's story (ask for them back, too.) Don't rule out putting photos on CD-ROM. At the higher resolutions, they are often very useful for some publications and for people putting together Web sites. Recommended resolution for scanned images is 300 to 600 dpi (dots per inch) for print publications, and 72 dpi for Internet use. Using more than 72 dpi for internet use only results in unnecessarily large image files.

A related heads-up: pictures or video taken by government employees on the job are public domain. With very few exceptions, the public has the right to have copies. Once we give copies out, the public can sell them, publish them on the Internet, or whatever — again, almost without restriction.

• **The Press Kit.** This package is put together for the press, generally for a specific event. It should include, at a minimum, a news release about the event, any fact sheets, the park brochure or park newspaper, background on speakers or program participants, and extra information reporters might need (a map with telephone and power outlets highlighted, for instance). Since having a reporter at the park to cover one event is a good chance to tell a broader story, this is a good vehicle to include recent news releases, story tips, materials on concession services and other partnerships.

• **The Information Packet.** This differs from the press kit in that it is not developed for a specific event, and can be used for non-media recipients. These generally have more emphasis on visitor services, safety tips, accommodations, food service, partnerships, and community connections. They rarely have news releases or media-specific information. These packets are great for tour leaders, VIP trips, community outreach, etc.
These packets often contain briefing statements prepared by the park or regional office. There is a standard format (which seems to have slight evolutions from year to year), and you're encouraged to stick with the format du jour. Regardless of format, though, focus on what your visitor needs to know. Briefing statements tend to bog down in detail that is beyond the interest of the recipient.

1.10 Media Advisories

A media advisory differs from a news release in that it is not intended for publication or to be rewritten for general consumption. Rather, it serves to guide media regarding coverage of upcoming events, and includies any special directions or requirements for covering the event.

Its target audiences are news directors, editors, assignment editors, producers of news shows — those people who decide if an event will be covered. Media advisories are particularly useful to get word out about those special needs when it is anticipated that large numbers of press will attend.

The media advisory aids the news media in planning assignments and provides an orderly, one-step communications for the public affairs officer who needs to reach the mass media with a given set of instructions. Give the media — and yourselves — as much lead time as possible.

It also serves as a summary of the highlights of an upcoming event and serves as a reminder for daybooks, assignment editors and photo desks.

Special instructions or directions for covering a story are needed primarily at times when there is Presidential participation or other well-known official, personality or head of state taking part who, by his/her position warrants news coverage.

An advisory may include such requirements as information about special credentials, logistical setups for live broadcasting requiring placement of microwaves or satellite trucks, availability of camera platforms and schedule for placement of cameras (particularly if Secret Service sweeps are needed); cable runs and requirements; provisions for mult boxes, lighting, and pool coverage.

The format of a media advisory is similar to that of a press release. Here are several well-tried suggestions:

• **Page Format:** The top of the page should follow the same format as a news release letterhead. It should note clearly and immediately that the document is a media advisory and should list the date and contact name and number for members of the press to contact for follow-up information. That contact should be the public affairs officer or the key person assigned to handle press arrangements.

• **Summarize key points:** List clearly the date, time, place and key participants identified by full name, title and role in the program, if needed, and other relevant information. Remember to include a brief description of the event.

• **Press availability:** If any participant or a "behind the scenes" person would make a good interview and/or be available for press interview, include instructions on how interviews can be arranged. Generally, a schedule is established. The statement may read something like:

"Reporters who wish to interview John Doe, concerning the development of the dinosaur exhibit, should contact Betty Smith for arrangements by November 1 at 555-555-1212."

Or, if not in wide demand, include this kind of statement:

John Doe, National Park Service scientist who headed the development of the dinosaur exhibit, will be available for interviews, prior to and following the 10 a.m. ceremony.

(Remember also that advance interviews are a tremendous way to bring advance attention to the event and attract public attention.)

Credentials: When press credentials are required, include information on what kind of credentials will be honored for the press area and/or if special credentials are being issued, include the information on how to apply for special credentials.

Example: White House, U.S. Capitol, State Department or Metropolitan Press credentials will be honored for the lighting of the National Christmas Tree. For those not holding any of these credentials, please submit in writing on your company's letterhead, the name and positions, date of birth, place of birth, social security number by FAX to 555-555-1212.

In addition to distribution to regular media outlets, always provide the advisory to wire services for inclusion on their "Daybook," which lists all news events on a given day and is provided to all news outlets which subscribe to the wire service. It is a valuable tool in assuring that word about the event reaches all media in the geographic area.

SECTION 2 — Interviews

Some folks would rather face a firing squad. That is not an option.

Park officials are interviewed, with varying degrees of frequency — and success. The advice below works for any medium, but interview sins will be particularly noticeable on television.

2.1 Basics

Know Your Subject! Know Your Subject! Know Your Subject!

Reporters are rarely specialists. Good ones will do some research before an interview, but even those will have little knowledge of park operations, or the reasons for the existence of a particular park. You, on the other hand, have only superficial knowledge of their trade. It is your job to make certain the reporter understands what you are talking about.

If you know the subject matter of the interview in advance, it's helpful to jot three or four bullet statements on a card to focus on the main points you want to make. Getting your message firmly in mind will reduce nervousness and keep your responses more succinct.

You may hear terms such as "off the record," "on background," and "not for attribution." These are used to describe an interview, or portion of an interview, where the information given will not appear in print, or will not be attributed to an individual. The distinctions among these terms are poorly understood, even by some reporters. Our advice is to avoid this game unless you know what you're doing and trust the reporter. The surest way to avoid being quoted about something you don't want on the public record is to avoid saying it.

Don't do interviews for an ego massage. During an interview, your job is to explain park programs, policies, and plans. Unless you are the subject of a personal profile —which sometimes happens with new personnel in key assignments or those departing such positions — your preference in china patterns or love for baseball trivia is not appropriate. Your role is spokesperson for the park and for the National Park Service. It doesn't even matter if your name appears in the finished story.

Tell the truth! Lies are trouble. If you are caught, the media have two stories instead of one. Their first story is the truth. The second is your effort to avoid the truth. The second may become bigger than the first.

One poorly understood fact is that the public and the media do understand human frailty. They don't expect you to be perfect. An admission of error is rarely important news — unless it is preceded by a denial of error.

If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Even experts need to refresh their memories. But get the answer as soon as possible. If circumstances permit, get your staff to come up with an answer, while you continue the interview.

Every reporter has a deadline. The daily media have daily deadlines. If a broadcast reporter must file a story at 4 p.m. to get on the 6 o'clock news, don't delay the interview until 3:30. The reporter needs time to return to the station, edit tape, and sometimes check details with you by phone. You can't do a thorough job when you don't have enough time; why expect a reporter to do so?

Even magazines have deadlines. Just because a story won't be published for six weeks, don't assume the reporter has six weeks to write it. Magazines often stop taking material weeks before the publication date. The rest of the time is taken up by printing, layout, design, and editing — all beyond the reporter's control.

2.2 The Enemy Within

Rarely will reporters try to trick or trap you. Their credibility is tied to their by-line in print or their performance on radio or television. They want to get the story right because failing to do so makes them look bad. They also don't want to antagonize you because they know they probably will have to deal with you on some future story.

The record is clear: most "misquotations" are the result of either of two failings on the part of the one interviewed. It is not a misquotation if you regretted saying it once you saw it in print. It is not misrepresentation if you failed to explain your point clearly, leaving the reporter to make an erroneous interpretation of what you meant.

Don't let the reporter form your words for you. If the reporter says something like, "Then what you mean is..," pay attention! You are about to hear how you'll be quoted unless you correct any mistake in the statement that follows.

Likewise, if an interviewer tries to cut off your answer, be assertive! Say that you'd like to finish your answer before moving on to the next question.

On rare occasions you'll face a hostile interview. Your only option is to play ball and practice some damage control. If you can show a good reporter that he might be interpreting the facts wrong, or that he doesn't have the facts at all, he might adjust his conclusions. This isn't guaranteed. If you know a hostile story is in the works, practice answering the likely questions. (This is a wonderful opportunity for your meanest and most cynical employee to play an important role!)

Do not repeat a hostile question. While you might not make lemonade out of lemons, you can move toward a positive response. For example:

> **Reporter:** "Sally, your campground staff is ignoring safe water rules and letting people get sick and maybe die, aren't they?
> **WRONG:** "No, we're not ignoring safe drinking water standards in our campgrounds, and I don't think anybody is going to die."
> **BETTER:** "We're very concerned about public health. Our campground water supply is safe. We test it daily, and we've begun an investigation into what else might be causing the illnesses we've had reported."

Acknowledge there is a serious issue. Keep your message simple. (Given the complex resource and people management issues with which you deal, that's not always going to be easy.) Keep coming back to your message. **Don't overreach in trying to spin a bad situation.** Better to admit mistakes and take action to correct them. You'll get points for credibility and candor.

Reporters are professionals, even if some are inexperienced. You were once an inexperienced professional. Keep appointments or provide a solid explanation if you can't. Don't insult reporters. Don't talk down to them. Nobody likes such treatment. If they seek an appointment in advance, it is fair to ask what subjects they want to cover in the interview. That allows you time to prepare properly. It is not fair to ask that questions be submitted in advance.

If you have a schedule to keep, remind them at the beginning how much time you have for them. That way, no one should be caught off guard when you say, "I'm sorry, but I have to leave now." Emergencies will be understood.

2.3 Comments, Please!

"No comment!"

Try waving a red flag in front of a bull. It is less painful than the reaction you will get from saying "no comment" to a reporter on deadline.

You can say: "Park Service regulations do not allow me to give out that information because.." (Tell them why).

Or you can say: "I don't know. I'll check and call you back." This is a great line. It means you will try to help! But follow through and call them back. Soon.

Some questions are so obvious you should always have the answers. You still need to consider what those are. A few common ones:

- Why is this a park? What are the reasons it was set aside?
- What are your responsibilities in the park?
- Where does this park rank in the National Park System? (size, visits, budgets, and other simple measures)
- How does the park benefit the local community? The nation?
- What is there to do here?
- Where do visitors come from?
- What is the park's worst problem?

Relax! History records no proven incidents of cannibalism by journalists. Neither cameras nor microphones bite. Talk to the reporter or the camera, one to one. Forget the larger audience. It isn't there during the interview. If you have prepared for the worst questions you can imagine, you will have every reason to be confident!

Many interviewers will wrap up by asking you if there's anything else you'd like to say. Anticipate this by knowing in advance what points you want to cover. If there's something worth saying and you haven't had the opportunity, use the opening provided by the reporter. But try to say the most important information up front in the interview. If the reporter's listening, those first answers can influence the rest of the interview.

2.4 Media Specifics

For a print media interview, learn about the publication's readership. Prepare accordingly. Newspapers and magazines have a great capacity for reporting details. Know the ones that are relevant. Be aware of whether a reporter is taking notes or using a tape recorder. If you feel you must go off the record — even though we advise against it — make sure recorders are turned off before you talk, and the reporter has agreed to what is going to be off the record. Make use of fact sheets or other written material that can provide the details (of, say, budgets and staffing) that can bog down an interview.

For a radio interview, remember that numbers are terrible. So are rambling answers. Be

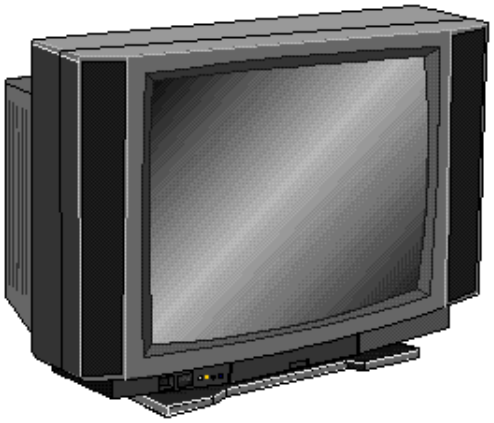
succinct. Be brief. Be to the point. If you have to think through an answer, do it before you start. In a taped interview, an editor can eliminate a pause before the answer much more easily than one in the middle of your statement.

For television, if you have enough notice, get out your best, newest uniform, have your hair cut — anything that will enhance your appearance. Just before the actual interview, visit a mirror and check yourself. Otherwise, the rules are much like those for radio. Camera operators will often ask you to repeat an answer just so they can get a different angle. They also may ask for casual footage of you talking with the reporter. Remember, they are doing this for the picture, but the sound is on and anything dumb you might say could be used against you.

Focus your eyes wherever the camera operator tells you. But do focus on something. An unfocused gaze or wandering eyes are quite noticeable to a viewer. Good posture is a must. Don't fidget or swivel in your chair.

See more detailed television advice in Section 3.

SECTION 3 — The Magic of Television



Television is the most powerful communications tool there is for reaching a wide audience and leaving a lasting impression.

No matter what your story or message, it probably can be told better and quicker through the magic of television. Conversely, no medium can make you look as bad if you're not prepared for the harsh reality of the lens. (Think about all those sweaty, nervous people you've seen on CBS's "60 Minutes" over the years.)

Fortunately, most television reporters and crews have a special affection for national parks and the Park Service. We have the stories, the pictures and the people that make good television, so you'll usually find yourself in friendly company.

Dealing with electronic media, as opposed to the pencil press, requires some change in your thinking and planning. Print reporters are interested in details and substance. Electronic media want good video, first and foremost, and just highlights of a particular story.

Here are some quick tips on how to deal with the electronic media. We'll also include some general advice about video production.

3.1 Think Visually

Television news is driven by video footage, preferably footage with some movement or action. Sure, they might cover your "talking head" news conference or interview but they're going to want other pictures (or B-roll, as editors call it) to illustrate the issue or problem.

So whether it's breaking news, an interview or a news conference, have some places and pictures in mind that show what you're talking about. Give the reporter or producer your suggestions. The more cooperation you show in helping them get what they want, the better they'll treat you in the story.

3.2 Logistical Needs

For special events and news conferences, give some extra thought to staging to accommodate camera crews. Outside locations generally are best, with a park-like background. Vistor centers, historic structures, or even entrance signs are also good backgrounds. Often crews do not have time to scout locations, so your knowledge of the park will help them do a better job. Television crews will need extra time to set up equipment. Provide them a power source, if possible. Keep a couple of outdoor extension cords handy. And check with maintenance to make sure plugging in one more tape recorder doesn't throw the visitor center into darkness!

Reserve a section for television cameras and pick a position that does not look directly into the sun. If several camera crews are expected, try to rent a "mult-box," a device that lets them connect their audio cables to the main sound system.

Let the news crews park their trucks as close as possible to the action. Don't suggest any

five-mile hikes — the gear gets very heavy. If parking is limited, have trucks come early and unload, and then return after the event. Depending on the distance and type of equipment used, media crews may need to make long cable runs away from the main event. They'll need to provide cable troughs or similar safety measures if there is pedestrian traffic in the area.

3.3 Interviews

Be in uniform to present an image that's professional, official and authoritative. Wear a hat if you're outside, but if they ask you to remove it because of lighting conditions, hold it in front of you. Take off the shades, especially those mirrored sunglasses. Look engaging, and smile when appropriate. The camera operator will tell you where to focus your eyes, but generally you'll be looking at the reporter.

Pay attention to the background. If possible, you should pick the interview site. Is your office tidy and professional? The same image considerations should be made outside. Don't set up an interview only to have a smoke-belching park dump truck rumble by in the background. Pick a background that projects park qualities or is relevant to the story.

Take time before the interview to go over the main ideas you want to convey so you can stay on message. Speak in complete sentences and keep your answers short. This is no time for a long explanation. In a five-minute interview, you might be lucky to get 10 seconds of actual air time. Still, don't just give "yes" or "no" answers. Add some detail. But when you've made your points, stop talking. Let the reporter fill the silence with another question.

Most important, be yourself. Think of it as a simple conversation between you and your questioner. If you try to fake expertise or sophistication, it will be painfully apparent when you watch yourself on the tube. The camera loves people who are natural and open.

Most stations don't want to fool with providing you a copy of the tape, so it's better not to ask. Find out when the story will run and tape it off the air.

3.4 Deadlines

Deadlines are different for television. Unless it's a real hot story, television won't show up until about 10 a.m. And you shouldn't schedule anything after about 2 p.m. if you want to make the early newscasts. Give stations as much notice as you can. They plan days ahead, except for breaking news. Call the assignment editor initially, then fax whatever written material you have.

3.5 Handouts

Most television news reporters are generalists who may cover a fire, a school board meeting and a park story on the same day. When they arrive at the park, it's important to hand them a fact sheet to help them put the story together — some background on the issue and basic information about the park, acreage, visitation, and the names and titles of people they will interview.

Some reporters will still get it wrong, calling us the U.S. National Parks Department or butchering the park name, but at least you will have made the effort.

3.6 Technical standards

Television stations have technical standards for any pictures that go out over their signal. This is a polite way of saying that they're probably not interested in the footage you've taken with the park's VHS camera. Sure, if it's something spectacular like a bear attack or a dramatic rescue, they'll want to take a look. But don't attempt to build a library of stock footage with inexpensive and unsophisticated equipment.

Likewise, don't attempt to make your own public service announcements or video news releases. Unless you have the right gear and know what you're doing, the effort will be amateurish and wasted. Video news releases generally are not worth the time or expense.
Do keep a library of color slides of your park's best scenes. They can be used by both television and print media.

If you do record an event or a news happening with a video camera, compose your shots carefully and hold them for at least seven to 10 seconds before training the camera on something else. Do not zoom or pan unless absolutely necessary, then do so very slowly. Try to shoot on manual focus if you can. A camera on auto focus will continually adjust on the closest object, and the result will be irritating. Remember, the camera mike will pick up all ambient sound, including your comments.

With the growth of cable television, there's a much bigger market for travelogues. The Travel Channel's "Great Park Adventures" series is a good example. Don't be shy about calling producers — cable or broadcast — to pitch an idea for a feature.
If you have a good idea for a PSA or a small video project, ask one of your local stations if they'd do it as a community service. Or you might offer it as a class project for television communications students at a local college. And there are many good freelance producers who work very cheaply.

For big video projects, you should go through Harpers Ferry and the Department's Audio-Visual Center in Denver. Your regional public affairs office can give you the details.

3.7 Radio

Radio is an audio medium — you hear it, but you don't see or handle it. Therefore, the words you use are critical because they convey a large portion of the message.

If you're being interviewed, the rules are much like television. You want a clear message in mind, and you want to be brief. While radio interviews, particularly on public radio, tend to be longer than television stories, short "sound bites" are still appropriate. Like television, reciting long strings of numbers will let your listeners drift off.

Many radio interviews take place over the phone. Don't use your speaker phone. The sound quality is poor and background noise is a problem. Also avoid portable or cell phones for the audio quality reason.

Radio interviews on the phone — whether live or taped — are often comfortable because

you can look at notes or put your feet up on the desk. But don't get too comfortable and ramble. Neither should you sound like you're reading off a press release.

With in-person interviews, the reporter will take care of where the microphone's located. You only need to concentrate on speaking clearly and concisely.

Radio reporters who come to your park are also likely to want some background sound. Depending on the story, this might be the happy sounds of visitors, part of an interpretive talk, the sounds of hammers working on the new visitor center, or fire sirens heading to the burning woods. These sounds are how radio reporters paint pictures; they are the radio equivalent of a photographer's work.

3.8 Public Service Announcements

Radio stations generally broadcast a few public service announcements or public calendar items for non-profit groups and government agencies.

This can be a good way of getting publicity for an event, but before you go to the work of putting together PSAs, make sure the stations will use them. Advance publicity is not easy to get.

Typical PSAs are 30 seconds or less. Write it as you would speak it — in 30 seconds you'll say about 80 words.

Check with stations on how far in advance they want to receive PSA copy; five weeks is a typical lead time. Also chat with the person who's in charge of PSAs. Most stations receive far more copy than they can use. A personal contact can help your item reach the airwaves.

PSA copy must be clearly marked with start and stop dates. This tells the announcers when the message is timely, and, with luck, the station will pull the announcement at the right time.

You will almost always produce a timed script rather than an actual audio tape. The latter are expensive to produce, and you probably don't have the quality equipment to do it right.

If you do want to produce a major PSA campaign, contact the regional or the WASO public affairs office. The Department has an audio (and video) production capability and contracting expertise. This is a good instance to not re-invent the wheel.

(See Section 3.6 on television PSAs.)

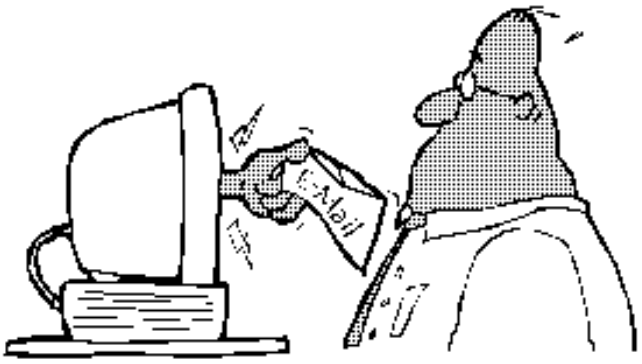
SECTION 4 — The World Wide Web

ParkNet (the National Park Service World Wide Web site) experiences over 600,000 requests (or hits) for information per week from over 12,000 unique computer hosts worldwide. This makes ParkNet one of the busiest and proactive visitor centers in the NPS. All park managers are encouraged to take advantage of this new medium and use ParkNet, and the World Wide Web, as an additional tool to distribute public and media information.
Each park unit has its own directory on ParkNet for which it is responsible. Your park's directory contains your homepage and any additional information you wish to publish on the World Wide Web. The servicewide standard for a park web site begins with a page template called the 17 Point Index. This page is designed to be a quick information reference sheet that visitors can download and print quickly. Many parks have published additional web pages serving information on interpretation, visitor services, special events, planning issues and press releases.

The technological infrastructure is in place to allow each park to have access to its directory on ParkNet. This permits park staff to add, delete or update information at will. This is extremely effective for situations that need immediate attention such as park closure and reopening, weather conditions, visitor impacts and management plans, etc.

ParkNet is divided into four main categories, **Links To The Past** (historical & cultural preservation), **Park Smart** (education & interpretation), **InfoZone** (public information) and **Nature Net** (natural resource preservation). The InfoZone is maintained by the WASO Office of Public Affairs and contains the Press Room. The Press Room contains Press Releases for issues of national interest and Park News, an area where press releases of local interest can be posted. At the top level of Park News are direct links to individual parks, which have published press releases to their web pages. This allows visitors to make these selections immediately to check information about the park(s) of their interest rather than go through a list.

Other capabilities of ParkNet include permitting parks to receive comments and questions electronically via cc:Mail. A number of parks have used this ability to receive public comments on Developmental Concept Plans and similar documents and some parks permit visitors to ask questions on services and programs. Presently the national volunteer program is permitting parks to post specific VIP position requests and receive applicant information by cc: Mail.



The park employees responsible for issuing press releases, interpretive and public information already have the skills necessary to provide good content. The next step is skill to process the existing electronic files so they can be placed on a park web page. There are several options for this. Each field cluster has a Web Cluster Coordinator who serves as the initial park contact. Questions can be cc:Mailed to NPS Webmaster who will direct parks to the proper contacts.

The software industry is making great progress in creating word processing and desktop publishing-like programs (Adobe “PageMill” and Microsoft “Front Page” to name a couple) that make authoring web documents seamless from existing platforms. Both Word Perfect 7 and Microsoft Office Professional allow users to create and save a document in both the word processing format and the necessary format for web publishing. This eliminates the need to author any document twice.

There are basic NPS Web Publishing Policies which are available either on the NPS web site at http://www.nps.gov/helpdesk (user name: NPS password: Mather) or via cc:Mail. To receive the policies via cc:Mail send a message to the NPS Webmaster with “webpolicy” (all one word) in the SUBJECT area.

Training on how to create web pages is available from self-instruction books to classes offered in local communities. The ParkNet Web Team, based in Washington, DC, working with the NPS Training Community has established Beginning and Intermediate classes on web page authoring. The classes are held monthly in the WASO Training Lab at Main Interior. The Web Team is also available to teach courses in the field on a benefiting account basis. If a park is interested contact the NPS Webmaster by cc:Mail.

SECTION 5 — A Broader Perspective

Public affairs professionals should provide management with a link to the public. How? Through regular media contact, by working with interest groups, by reading newspapers and seeking information on trends. Public affairs people, like the reporters they work with, are usually curious about the world around them. Those links to the world outside the NPS can be put to use when public affairs is part of the park management team developing strategy options, and when communication takes place both within the park and with the neighboring community.

Your work with media will likely have many common elements regardless of location. Market size will change, but television still needs pictures and print reporters still need a good story line. Conversely, carrying the park's message into the community — and the community's message back to the park — is likely to be very different depending on location. Your park public affairs program should look at how your community works and explore ways to reach the audience you need to reach. That may be through town hall meetings, being at the fair, going to service clubs, being a part of city government, visiting with the tourism association, doing school programs, exhibits and scores of other activities.

Not every public affairs person will do all of those described tasks, and many will have other duties not mentioned. You'll see an overlap with the work of park interpreters, concessions staff or law enforcement. The take-home lesson is this: a well formed public affairs program is much broader than media work and answering phone calls. Who does the work and what you call it is less important than the result.

In reality, most parks do not have an in-house public affairs staff, instead relying on regional or cluster level help. Some parks have public information officers. These jobs typically deal less in forming policy and advising management and more in conveying information to the public and responding to general media or public questions. In many parks, the job is a collateral duty. The section below is based on a 1996 outline of essential competencies for public information and public affairs people. As you develop job descriptions and seek candidates for jobs, use this a starting point, and work with the regional and WASO public affairs offices.

5.1 Public Affairs Compentencies

There are seven broad competencies ideally present in the public affairs field. The degree to which your staff should be expected to have them depends on its level of expertise or grade level. Here are the key points in each area:

• **Advising Management.** The lower graded PIOs are not expected to do this. At an intermediate level, they should be able to identify constituency groups and other sources of information and determine which communication methods are appropriate for the task at hand. At advanced levels, public affairs people should be able to assess likely public reaction prior to an NPS action, provide candid advice to management, and recognize sensitive situations where management should intervene.

• **Communication Skills.** This is the ability to write, speak and listen in a variety of situations. Those at a basic level should have knowledge of public speaking principles, be able to locate accurate data, present issues clearly, understand NPS park operations and understand journalistic writing. At an intermediate level, a person should have better

writing skills, the ability to present complex topics to groups, deal diplomatically with moderately controversial subjects and draw appropriate conclusions from complex data. A person at the advanced level understands and articulates NPS and DOI policy, provides training to others in making high quality presentations, establishes working relationships with diverse groups, defends the NPS policy in the face of heavy criticism in unstructured settings, and counsels management.

• **Media Relations.** At the basic level, a person should have a college degree in English, communications, journalism or experience in the field of public affairs. In addition, the person should be able to write news releases and feature stories on non-controversial subjects and conduct simple interviews. At an intermediate level, a person should be able to coach or train people prior to interviews, plan a news conference and conduct interviews with print and broadcast media including those regarding controversial or crisis situations. At an advanced level, a person is expected to establish rapport with key media representatives, and be skilled in representing controversial NPS policies or situations to national media, in large group settings and in press conferences. An advanced level requires the ability to work with media without necessarily consulting first with management.

• **Information Flow.** In support of the NPS mission, this aspect of the job includes distributing news clips, maintaining two-way communication between management and employees and communicating with external groups. At a basic level, this requires distributing clips, understanding audio-visual and multi-media presentations, and understanding the goals of constituent groups. At an intermediate level, this includes assembling multi-media presentations, skill in explaining the NPS mission to park partners, assembling and maintaining briefing papers, and skill in communicating management issues to park staff in a timely and accurate fashion. An advanced level person should be able to design and develop multi-media presentations, establish and maintain good relationships with park partners in routine and controversial situations, recognize potential problems with partners and advise management on solutions, and develop communications and public affairs strategies.

• **Special Events/Protocol.** Many high profile events bring scrutiny to the NPS and can help deliver its message. Public affairs professionals can help shape these events to the best advantage of the Service. At a basic level, a person should have knowledge of the fundamentals of event planning, the ability to explain the theme of a special event to park staff and media, and knowledge of publicizing special events. At an intermediate level, the person should be able to lead the event planning committee, understand the public relations planning needs for events, help organize park management and staff in a crisis and write basic speeches for park management. At an advanced level, a person should also be skilled in acquiring sponsorships of special events, and able to write clear statements for park management for speeches or in times of crisis.

• **Writing and Editorial Services.** Public affairs is often the repair shop for communications developed elsewhere. At a basic level, a knowledge of grammar, writing styles and spelling are essential. At an intermediate level, a person should be able to write well-organized speeches, research and write for a variety of publications, draft Congressional correspondence, and assemble and maintain briefing papers. An advanced

level person should be able to write clearly for management during times of crisis, produce summaries of briefing statements on controversial or complex issues, and confidently edit the writing of others in management.

Freedom of Information Act. Depending on the structure of your park, public affairs may or may not handle the Freedom of Information Act. Regardless of who handles the formal paperwork, an understanding of the principles of the act are essential. A basic level public information person should understand the spirit and general provisions of the law, and be able to search files to locate information. An intermediate level person should be able to draft FOIA response letters and understand the act well enough to recommend whether or not documents should be considered for withholding. At an advanced level, a person should be able to develop the justification for withholding documents or advocate for their release.

5.2 Other Public Affairs Considerations

A public affairs strategy is a lot more than media, speeches, FOIAs and public meetings. Our park messages will be lost if people have an underlying bad attitude about the park or the Park Service. Consider that automobile manufacturers spend millions of dollars to convince you to buy their newest car. But all of GM's best work can be for naught if the sales person treats you rudely.

At a park, public inquiries are frequently treated as interruptions in an otherwise organized day. Don't let that be the case in your park, or you may find you've lost more friends than you've gained. The keys to responding to public questions are well-known: courteous, informative answers. This needs to happen whether the requests come over the phone, by mail, in person, or by e-mail. We offer these recommendations:

Voice Mail. Most folks like to talk to real people, but accept voice mail as a newly necessary evil. Still, there's no reason to consign otherwise nice people to voice mail hell. Listen to your system as if you were a first-time caller. Can you always get to a real person quickly? Is your menu of choices a reasonable size? Can a person for whom English is a second language (more than a third of the population in many parts of the United States) understand the choices or find a non-English set of instructions? If you're transferred to a number that's not what you want, can you get back to a real person?

Lots of letters ask the same question, and we appropriately use a form letter to respond. Read some of yours as if you just received this answer in the mail. Are you satisfied? Do we intimidate with jargon, technical terms, abbreviations or condescending remarks? A hint: Good writers may be anywhere on your staff; put their talents to use, even if the form letter topic isn't in their realm of expertise.

Look at how we greet visitors in person — if you knew nothing about Old House National Historic Site, would you be satisfied after your visit? Do we volunteer answers to these kinds of questions: Where is my fee money going? Where's the bathroom? Where should I park? What should I be sure to see?

We'll preface this paragraph with "Yes, we know money is tight." Having said that, does your average law-abiding visitor ever see or talk with a person in a NPS uniform other than at the fee collection station? Do we have contractors or volunteers in places where we should more appropriately have the green and gray? Have you been creative enough to try to change it?

A well-rounded public affairs program has a lot to do with how symbols, images,

resources, facts and feelings relate to one another. Perception is reality. The NPS uniform is a powerful symbol of people doing good things. If your park's only uniformed presence is collecting money and giving tickets, we begin to skew the view of the symbol and ultimately hurt the Service's mission by leaving an impression that we care more about money and rules than visitors, people and resources.

5.3 When Errors Happen

Sometimes, no matter how hard you work with a reporter, he just doesn't get it right. Other times, it's a member of the public, an elected official or a special interest group that is mistakenly critical of you or your park.

The first step when you're tempted to fire a broadside back at a newspaper editor or other public institution is to take a breath and think again. Look at the error and see if it's really worth getting into a public match.

If the errors are relatively minor (wrong acreage, spelling, called you a park instead of a historic site), your best option is to simply call the reporter and ask that they make a note to get it right the next time and to fix the problem in their files so someone doesn't copy the same error.

If there are factual problems that really change the tenor of the story, ask for a printed or broadcast correction. You'll probably speak to an editor for this. The publication may print the correction if it believes it was wrong, or you may need to follow up with a letter to the editor explaining the park's position. Depending on your regional policy, at this point you may need to begin consulting with the regional public affairs officer.

If you believe there's a true bias or an ethics problem with the reporter (consistent errors, a spouse who has a financial stake in a park decision, a former employee, etc.) you're getting onto slippery ground. Talk with the regional public affairs office for advice on how to handle the issue.

If the story, editorial or other form of reporting about the park misconstrues NPS policy or makes other serious errors, a response is almost always required. Consult with the regional office on these; depending on the seriousness of the situation, the reply may come from the regional director or the Director.

5.4 Personal Opinion

All employees, of course, have a right to express their views. However, any view that a park superintendent or press officer expresses will commonly be interpreted as that of the National Park Service. Other employees may be in the same situation, especially if they identify themselves as park employees or residents.

If the opinion expressed is not the official NPS position, you must take explicit steps to avoid it being interpreted that way. It's essential to take every precaution to separate personal and professional opinions when dealing with the media or in public situations. Your personal opinion is not appropriate to express from behind your office desk, in your uniform, on official stationery or when using your title to accompany your signature on a personal letter.

5.5 Other Expressions

In addition to publishing letters to the editor, most newspapers (and many other kinds of publications) print longer articles. In newspapers, these are generally called op-ed pieces (they traditionally appear OPposite the EDitorial page). Regardless of name and placement, they offer a chance to write more thoughtfully and about topics that might not be Page One material. If you have this opportunity to reach a large audience, put your best writers to work on it. Again, be clear if this is an official Park Service position, or an opinion you hold as a private citizen.

Most newspapers and many other publications run editorials expressing the official view of the publication. This is one section of the paper that is meant to be biased — effective editorials take a strong stand on issues. How the editor (or group of editors) reaches that opinion varies. Sometimes there are no-brainer editorials: Honoring veterans on Veterans Day, encouraging people to vote, etc. Other times, editorial boards will invite players in an issue to come and tell their story. These are excellent opportunities to help inform readers and craft public opinion on an issue. Come armed with facts and a clear understanding of the NPS position; these are not sessions in which personal and agency views should be mixed.

Too often we wait until mid-crisis to meet these writers. Going to editorial boards (and other forums, such as community groups) before there's a controversial issue should be part of your public affairs program.

SECTION 6 — Crimes and Calamities

As any buck ranger knows, rumor can outrun reality. When something newsworthy happens in your park, you must work quickly and efficiently to overtake the gossip.

- **First:** You must have one spokesperson.
- **Second:** Your spokesperson must be fully informed.
- **Third:** Give your chosen spokesperson a chance to function in the role before disaster strikes. Emergencies are lousy training grounds.

A single source of information is essential in an emergency. It sharply reduces the likelihood of conflicting or confusing "official" statements. The source, however, is only as good as the information he or she gets. It is the information officer's job — not the field staff working on the problem — to determine (in consultation with top management) what information is releasable. Reporters are aware that we can't always release everything we know, especially in the case of a death or a criminal investigation. Aside from management, the information officer should be the only person making requests that impose on field personnel's valuable time.

The superintendent is responsible for management of a disaster situation. That may mean the activation of an incident command team from outside the park. In any case, the public information effort supports and explains the management program.

In many cases, the first contact a reporter has with a park is during a crisis. (A shrewd spokesperson will make sure these names remain media contacts. There's nothing better than having a reporter who knows the turf.) How we react to the crisis, and how we supply information about the crisis, may forever affect the reporter's perceptions of the National Park Service.

Sometimes the first word to the news media of a disaster will come from the public information officer. Your spokesperson should contact the principal news media as soon as there's enough information to convey the scope of the calamity.

Don't forget: Your crisis is a reporter's crisis, too. Reporters are under pressure to give clear, concise, up-to-the-minute reports. Regardless of the medium in which they work, reporters are rushing to beat deadlines.

6.1 Predictable Demands

Radio stations will want tape-recorded interviews. They can usually get these by phone. Newspapers and wire services will want facts in depth. Television and still photographers will want to take pictures. Depending on the incident, maps are often very useful in communicating information.

The spokesperson can expect to spend a lot of time on the telephone. Especially at rural parks, most reporters will be too far away to cover an emergency in a timely manner, unless the

emergency is expected to last for more than a day. In urban parks, news crews may arrive along with the first rangers.

The public information officer will need exclusive access to a telephone and a computer terminal with e-mail capability. (A fax and printer can be shared, but must be nearby) He or she must be able to work away from the eager eyes and ears of reporters. He or she must have full access to the management team.

The press will need an "information central." If a couple of local reporters show up, this might be as simple as asking them to work in a quiet corner of the visitor center. In a big event, you may set up a more formal briefing area. Regardless of the scale, there should be a space that allows them to work without interfering with either the emergency or running the park.

Know ahead of any incident how and if you can provide reporters the basics: phones, good lighting, work tables, chairs, electrical outlets. It is our responsibility to tell reporters where they can find the nearest phone (because some parks do not have cellular access), where a satellite truck might get the best reception or where to find the best view, an electrical outlet, vending machines or the rest room. They are on our turf, doing a job that will help us if we help them do it right. The more complete their information, and the sooner it is available, the better they can inform the public.

In short, have a plan. Crises don't conveniently happen when the right people are at hand — preparation can minimize problems when another must step in, whether an acting superintendent or an acting press officer.

6.2 The Usual Sequence of Events

Incidents often follow the same sequence regardless of the nature of the crisis. Here's a typical sequence:

You recognize an event has happened.

Your public information officer gathers as much information as possible, and heads to a computer for a 15-minute foray in creating a news release. This won't be fancy but it needs to be accurate. It needs to have the basics known at that point — who, what, when, where. It can acknowledge that more information will become available.

If some of the basics have been broadcast over park radios, the park is likely to receive inquiries before the release is complete. Have someone other than your PIO answer the calls only to collect phone and fax numbers. Using a list that's already created (See Section 1.8), the PIO or staff will fax the release to local media and whoever else has inquired in the time it has taken to prepare your basic release. Here are your most likely "customers:"

- **Wire Services:** The Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and United Press International (UPI) reach almost all news media. Put their local bureaus at the top of your list since they reach the most people.
- **Radio Stations:** They deal in instant news and are the quickest ways to spread news fast. Call the local ones. Call the all-news radio for your area first.
- **Newspapers:** Reach the daily papers first, unless the weeklies are the closest media outlets.
- **Television:** Local stations only. They'll feed to the network for a really good or really big event.

• **Internet:** Work with the regional public affairs office to decide if the incident warrants attention on a regional or WASO public affairs home page. Follow established procedure to at least add it to your park's home page.

The first inquiries almost always come by phone. If the disaster is serious enough, the media will arrive in person. In between faxing the news release and the media arrival, figure out the best location for photographs and whether there is a need for a news conference.
If the incident goes on long enough for the media to arrive, they'll want to get to the scene, especially the photographers. Don't be surprised — it's not ghoulish, it's their job.

For multi-day incidents, establish a briefing schedule so the incident managers can cover basic updates once for a group of reporters. Individual interviews with principal incident managers will also need scheduling.

After a long or serious incident, expect media post-mortems. As the incident winds down, think ahead on how the park will answer question about why it happened, was there an adequate response, will it happen again, is the public safe, etc.

6.3 Bringing Everyone Together

As noted, sometimes it is desirable to hold a news briefing rather than individually answer questions from several journalists. This is particularly true if you want to make available the incident commander or another top management person who has too many other responsibilities to do lots of individual interviews.

Pick a convenient place and time for this gathering. Spread the word. The wire services can distribute an editors advisory for you or post it on a "daybook." Also, notify the offices of the news organizations you know are covering by phone. Think about when to hold the briefing so it meets the deadline needs of the greatest number of news outlets. Otherwise you're not helping them or your park.

It's smart to make a separate, faxable, media advisory to announce this briefing. Make it clear that this is not a public meeting, but a press conference. Make sure all news releases or advisories on the event have a different and pertinent headline, release date, and if necessary, time. (Review Section 1.10 on Media Advisories for suggestions on content.)

At a news conference, hand out a press release shortly before the speaker begins. The information in the release will parallel the prepared statement you give at the start of the conference.

After giving a statement, you'll need to take questions from the press. A press conference can have more than one speaker or subject matter expert on hand to answer questions, but keep the numbers small. You're adding confusion rather than value by having several speakers.

Have an exit strategy — know how much time you'll spend, and let the press know when it's over by saying "I'll take two more questions." Keep in mind the earlier advice for interviews; a press conference question session is simply a series of several short interviews. And like an interview with a single reporter, rehearsing the likely questions before the press conference will allow you to be more relaxed and credible.

6.4 Pooling

Sometimes it is impossible to transport all the media to the scene of a disaster or for reporters to get there on their own. Common practice in these cases is to establish a "pool." The reporters who get to go share their information and pictures with those who are left behind.

In certain instances, when the number who can be accommodated is small, the pool might be restricted to a television camera operator and a newspaper or wire service photographer. Usually the pool will include representatives from each type of media. Call the media together. Tell them there is a pool opportunity. Ask them to work out among themselves who will go and how they will share afterwards.

The media compete with one another. They don't like pools and you will suffer if you have created an unnecessary pool situation. However, if there are no reasonable alternatives, they will understand your decision.

If you are stuck with selecting the pool representatives, go with the largest organizations on the theory they are better equipped to provide timely duplicates for the rest — but make sure they agree to do so! It is also advisable to select one representative from your local media who probably knows the park and its day to day workings. That way you cannot be criticized for ignoring your communities.

If transportation is required — beyond a roadblock or into the backcountry, for instance — consider who will do the transporting and what safety issues should be addressed. If we fly them in our helicopter (a contract ship, most likely), don't charge them for the ride. If there's time, tell reporters what safety gear or other items they need to bring — otherwise the park may need to come up with extra gear such as Nomex or hardhats.

Remember, too, most of the reporters have been to more catastrophes than you have — and maybe more than the emergency park crew. They do not want to be killed. They do want a story. They have state laws protecting them from being prohibited from going places to do a story. You do the National Park Service a disservice by unnecessarily restricting access.

You should give reporters warning of hazards they may encounter, and make sure they know of any protective equipment that may be required or recommended. When access restrictions are imposed, work to make sure the media understand that there are compelling reasons (such as a crime scene investigation or an air space closure to ensure the safety of aerial tankers during a fire.)

6.5 Public Information or Public Affairs?

You may think these words are used interchangeably, but they mean very different things.

Anyone who can speak well in public and has a command of the local language can be a public information officer. This is a function of providing accurate, factual data and information to an inquirer. (For instance, if a park is located near the Mexican border, that park PIO ought to be able to speak English and Spanish or at least ought to know who to call upon to translate.)

The public information officers who work with incident command teams will not only be able to deliver those factual reports, but will be well-practiced in many of the logistical hurdles peculiar to working with media and getting information to local communities. This will include things like ordering new phone lines, finding supplies of fax machines, getting Nomex gear for visiting media, locating audio equipment for news conferences and meeting dozens of other special needs.

A public affairs officer is trained to provide the factual reports and can serve as the spokesperson for an incident, but is less likely to have current experience in doing many of the logistical tasks. Their jobs are less operational and more strategic. The public affairs officer is more likely to work with park or regional management to analyze public opinion, determine communication strategies, consider political implications of decisions, and provide policy level advice to the superintendent and other senior management.

In a relatively straightforward incident, the public information officer will handle all the media and communications. In more complex and controversial incidents or events, the regional or Washington public affairs offices will be involved.

(See Section 5 for additional guidance.)

6.6 Credentialing

Very large, complicated events with multiple organizations and public information officers may require having the media prove who they are and implementing restrictions on media activities. Think hard before requiring credentials other than the normal business identification that most legitimate news organizations issue. Doing your own credential work isn't easy, can quickly cause more problems than it solves, and is not recommended.

You will see "credentials" on reporters attending cabinet level and Presidential news conferences and political conventions. These are the laminated cards on neck chains. These credentials are provided on a semi-permanent basis. A reporter is assigned a beat and the credential comes with the beat, not the incident.

If you do decide to issue park credentials, make sure you have staff support to aid in preparing the necessary cards (usually worn around the neck), in distributing them, and in making sure your staff knows what the credentials mean. Once you begin using them for an event, do not treat them casually. They are a sign that you trust and respect the media who wear them.

6.7 Photography

Give newspaper and television photographers maximum cooperation. A nighttime network news piece is viewed by several million people — more people than we can ever reach with a single news release. We work hard to deliver our mission-based message. These folks can do it for us.

Common sense dictates a few precautions: Only legitimate news photographers should be allowed in an emergency area and then only with an "escort." This is not amateur hour! They know this, but they should not be allowed where they can interfere with remedial work or disturb evidence of a crime. Photographers are there to get pictures — preferably dramatic ones - but they won't kill themselves to do it.

Just as it's a good idea for superintendents and public information officers to get to know the local media before a crisis, it also makes sense for the park staff who will be on the front lines of an emergency to know how to deal with media. Reporters and photographers are in a competitive, deadline-driven world. Confrontations with rangers or others at an incident can turn ugly in a hurry, and the ill-effects can last long after the incident.

When the response team practices the medical or logistical steps needed to respond to an

incident, ask a public information officer or public affairs person to help by playing the role of reporter. Practice how you'll respond to requests to get close to the action, interview survivors, fly in your helicopter, walk the fire line, or photograph the flood damage. Understand why you're making the media-related decisions you make, and that you appreciate the consequences.

6.8 Incident Command Team

The disaster is a big one. As superintendent, you may call in an Incident Command Team. If it is your own park-based IC team, make sure that it includes a public information officer. If the team is being called in from "away," it is likely the team will have a public information officer but make sure; some "short" teams don't. If the incident is at all likely to interest the outside world, we recommend having one.

Having an IC Team with a PIO from outside the park allows a park public information officer to:

- Continue his or her usual tasks — often the emergency does not affect the normal flow of visitors or park programs.
- Serve as a liaison between the team and the superintendent (such as attending the planning meetings, deciding who will do the television interview — remember, we like the NPS uniform out there on the news).
- Strategize with the superintendent on the public affairs aspects of the disaster (such as, can you use the disaster to tell other park messages and when and who notifies the Congressional delegations).
- Provide support and local knowledge to the team information function (such as community relations, internal park communications).

The team information officers can take the burden of providing factual information to inquirers while park and regional management take on the more sensitive policy questions, both from the press and elected officials.

6.9 What the Spokesperson May Not Do:

- **Don't Delay.** Time is crucial to you and the media. Beat the rumors.
- **Don't lie**. Lies are spelled with seven letters: T-R-O-U-B-L-E.
- **Don't speculate.** Speculation that proves wrong can be taken as lies. The job is to reduce chaos and misinformation — not to contribute to it.
- **Don't keep secrets.** Where facts are known, tell them, unless you have a good reason not to. If there is reason to withhold facts, tell the reason.
- **Don't ad lib.** You may think there isn't time for a formal news release, but there must be time to organize coherent notes so you can tell the story correctly. Use these notes to make a statement and prepare a quick advisory to fax out.
- **Don't joke.** They fall flat. Morbid humor may relieve tension, but the official spokesperson must reflect the solemnity and severity of the situation. The friends and relatives of victims are rightfully intolerant of those who make light of their troubles. Jokes rarely translate well in print.
- **Don't neglect to follow up.** Note every question for which you have no immediate answer. Then, at the earliest opportunity, get the answer and give it to the reporter who asked.

• **Don't "stonewall."** "No comment," like "I take the Fifth Amendment," is perceived as an admission of guilt, even if unintended. Practice answers such as:

"We won't know until the investigation is complete."

"I would tell you if I knew, but I don't, so I'll have to get that for you."

"Our policy prohibits release of the names of juvenile victims (or suspects)."

"I am waiting for the answer to that myself — you'll get it as soon as I have it."

• **Don't release names of:**

- A victim who is unconscious or dead and reasonable efforts to notify family or first of kin have not been made.
- A victim of a sexual assault
- A juvenile victim or suspect (Other government agencies managing situations adjacent to yours may not have this policy. Too bad. We don't release names until conditions are met. Refer them to the other agency if they push.)
- A witness or victim whose condition or circumstances makes them likely victims of further crimes.
- Personnel involved in an incident response who could be placed at risk of retaliation. (This is an area where the public's right to know gets balanced against an employee's safety.)

• **Don't give explicit details of extreme injuries or brutal fatalities.** The injured has clear privacy rights, and the deceased's family can legally be spared the graphic details making Page One. In most cases, the details are not pertinent to the actual news story. And until autopsies are done, the initial details reported at an incident may be wrong.

Don't make ethnic or racial references unless they are essential to the incident. Always avoid slang.

• **Don't convict suspects.** Never say "John Jones set fire to the hotel, but we caught him." A better statement is: "We believe the hotel fire was caused by arson. We have a suspect, John Jones, in custody and are continuing our investigation."

If formal charges have been brought, you can say: "John Jones has been charged with the crime of arson in the first degree in connection with the hotel fire. First degree arson is defined as..." Don't say, "John Jones has confessed." Rather, "John Jones has offered a confession and we are investigating (or, we have brought charges,) based on that." This is extremely important. Violation of this policy can jeopardize any expected legal case against John Jones.

• **Don't assign liability.** It is inappropriate to say either "the park failed to warn visitors of the danger," or "the visitors ignored the park's warnings." Why? Because such statements place responsibility — and liability. Like criminal charges, these are matters better left to formal investigative findings or courts of law.

• **Don't confirm or deny information released by other sources unless you either confirm it with the source or determine if it releaseable by the NPS.** Otherwise, you may compromise an investigation or other legal proceedings.

These last three categories are chief reasons for the caution against speculating. Your job is to give facts. If facts must be determined by a formal process, then you don't have facts to give unless that process is complete.

SECTION 7 — Staging Public Meetings

7.1 Event time!

As government becomes more open and citizen participation is an increasingly usual way of doing business, you'll find your park doing more public meetings.

Planning is essential. A checklist (use the Special Events sample in the Appendix) and timetable for the details should be devised to suit your park and revised as plans become more certain. They are the basic means to check and double check every facet of the program.

You may want to find out from the public what to consider in a planning document for the park. Or you have the document fully prepared and need to get public comments. A news release speaking to these points is one way to solicit comment. Another way is to hold informal workshops, a more formal meeting or the most formal, a hearing.

At a minimum, each of these should be advertised with a news release. If you are worried that your news release won't get used by media (remember, they're under no obligation to consider your event news) and want to guarantee the public notice is done, you may buy a display advertisement (instead of a legal ad; the latter usually in the classifieds and printed in tiny type). Consult with the regional public affairs office if you need advice on how this is done. Also consider other ways of reaching your audience — bulletin boards, friends groups, using local organization newsletters, etc.

A public workshop is an informal gathering, typically consisting of the park staff associated with the project and perhaps a specialist (say, a Denver Service Center planner) who talks one on one to whomever saunters by about their ideas.

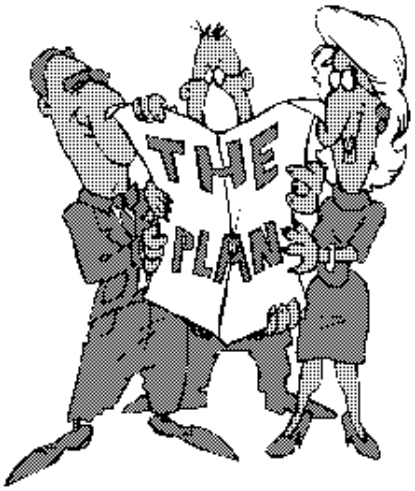
A public meeting has an agenda. Usually it calls for a presentation of the document or topic by a NPS official, followed by comments from the press and public.

A more formal public hearing is one of the few times it may be prudent to hire a court reporter and where speaking guidelines ought to be established. For example, you might use an unbiased third party as a facilitator or "master of ceremonies." This might be a retired federal judge, or a local person with good skills in running a public meeting. If there are likely to be several people testifying, the MC should set a time limit for each speaker. Establish that elected officials speak first, followed by government agencies, followed by general public. Note that written testimony will be accepted, and that speakers should not feel compelled to read an entire written statement.

Public hearings can be contentious and are certainly the most expensive to organize. It is generally the meeting of last resort, when your issues are too controversial and/or of interest to a large group. You may end up holding meetings in several locations. Refer to NPS-2 for details on the planning process. The National Environmental Policy Act also spells out purpose.

Expect press to be prepared to look for you or a subject matter specialist at the end of a meeting or during a break. Television might cover your meeting live, or plan to put a report on the late evening news. If you're running the meeting, designate a spokesperson who can go on camera or work with print reporters.

SECTION 8 — Staging A Special Event



In the life of every park comes a time when a ground breaking, dedication, news conference, big public meeting or other ceremony is held to which the public and "Very Important People" are invited.

The event generally is held to bring public attention to a new facility, program, policy change or plan that otherwise might not attract the immediate attention of the media and public. Money may control the size of the event. If it's not clear just why you're having an event then the first step needs to be a decision on the reason and theme of the event.

8.1 Date and place

As early as possible, select a date for the event. This should fit the schedule of the key speaker or participants. Reserve the location and make a tentative list of people to be invited as guests. Make sure your program date does not conflict with others that might siphon off media or key guests. Begin to outline a program, planning how you'll handle guests, who will be asked to speak, what if any entertainment needs to be arranged, and the logistics — things like hotel space, parking, and equipment rentals.

This is also the time to plan for weather problems. Even indoor events can be affected by weather. Are you planning to have people park on grass that could be soggy? Walk or stand outside through inclement weather?

Regional public affairs offices and special event or incident command teams can help plan and execute large events. Don't be afraid to ask. It's better to get more help than you need than to ask too late. Involve the WASO Legislative Affairs Office and your regional legislative affairs person if the event will (or should) involve members of Congress or local congressional staff.

8.2 Media Arrangements

For public events, issue radio public service announcements to be used up to the day of the event. See Section 3.7 for details.

Issue a general news release about two weeks before the event. This will alert the media and the public that an event has been scheduled. In some cases, you'll want to give more than two weeks notice. In rare cases when you're expecting a large media crowd, you'll want to put out media advisories dealing with equipment placement, credentials and other issues.

About a week before an event, issue an editors advisory to local print and broadcast media describing the elements of the event that most merit media attention. This will provide the basic outline of the event and describe any special information such as media parking, satellite truck parking, availability of audio feeds, and any special press conferences or press availabilities for the principal guests.

A press kit (See Section 1.9) should be prepared and given to those covering the event.

8.3 Invitations

Speakers and other VIPs deserve a special invitation with an RSVP. Make sure your invitation list is complete, but keep in mind the platform requirements and the length of the program. Only the very rare program will run more than 60 minutes.

If your event warrants the appearance of the NPS Director, other members of the WASO Directorate, the Secretary or members of Congress, their letters of invitation should be coordinated through the regional public affairs office.

Invitation letters should not only include the time, place and date of the event, but the role you want the invitee to play. Also include a description of the event, its significance, anticipated audience size, other speakers, media coverage and related events such as lunch, tours or receptions.

If there's a meal, determine who is going to pay for it. Don't surprise your guests by hitting them up for $10 at the start of the buffet line!

8.4 Protocol

Protocol often dictates who will be the master of ceremonies. Generally it is the highest ranking National Park Service official. This is an important role and one that might not be determined until a few weeks or even a few days before the event.

Speakers should be chosen for their relationship to the project, their position and their interest in the event. Also consider their ability to speak. Make sure you have firm commitments from the speakers, then follow up to provide additional information such as the expected length of their speech, a topic, details of transportation, accommodations and any special needs. (Don't forget to find out if they will be accompanied by spouses, children or others who might need special seating or transportation.)

Prepare a scenario for the program and related events, keeping in mind that someone must be in charge of each aspect of the program. It doesn't need to be the same master of ceremonies, but someone must to be responsible for moving the crowd from the ribbon cutting to the tour to the food and so forth.

Prepare a detailed, timed script for the program. This will almost always be a work of fiction, but it helps keep everyone on track. This script is for the master of ceremonies and other park officials who have event management roles.

Be sure people are assigned to meet arriving guests. These escorts should be in uniform. It's our show, and we want to look the best. If you are short on staff, use volunteers to help direct traffic or seat other visitors.

Always allow speakers time and a place to rest before they appear on stage, especially if they are coming from some distance away. Let them know where the bathroom is if they need to freshen up or change clothes.

Always set aside a "holding room" for speakers and platform guests to gather before they go on stage. Make sure they know to be at this location. A holding room gives the event coordinator a sure way of knowing everyone has arrived and if there need to be any last minute program changes. This "holding room" could be the superintendent's office, a neighboring building, or even a quiet, roped-off area behind the platform.

Note: See Appendix 5 of this guide for more detailed information on protocol.

8.5 The Platform

If anything can go wrong at a special event, it usually happens at the platform.

In arranging for the platform, of course, you'll need a good idea of how many people it needs to handle. (The platform is used so the speaker can be seen by the audience. It could, in fact, be a stage or other prop to get the group up above the crowd.) Platform groups tend to grow. A general rule is no more than 20 people. Work hard to keep the number down and find other ways to recognize "second tier" guests.

Remember that each platform guest must be introduced. This takes time, even if not a lot is said about each person.

Be sure lighting is adequate across the entire platform. If the event is outside, consider where the sun will be at the time of the event. Consider the speakers and the audience; neither wants to spend a half hour squinting. If photographers or television crews will cover the event, make sure the lighting meets their needs and they're not trying to add light stands at the last minute.

The **dais** (Day-iss) is the raised platform for guests. A **podium** is a smaller platform on which the speaker may stand. A **lectern** is a slant-topped desk, often equipped with a light, on which the speaker can rest his notes and a glass of water. The lectern may be on an open pedestal or be an enclosed stand.

Part of your planning is to determine which of these items is required. Your choice will also affect the choice of a sound system. And those choices will affect media coverage as well.

A word of advice on sound systems. You may think your park owns an adequate system that's compatible with modern media needs and produces clear sound for a large outdoor crowd. Check if this is really true. You may find yourself breathing easier if you contract out the sound portion to a company that does outdoor public events for a living.

8.6 Special Needs

Plan for a special media section if you're expecting significant numbers of reporters or several television cameras. If you're unsure what the media needs, invite them to come out ahead of time and work with you on pool equipment, locations, utility needs, and lighting.

You'll often need special items such as scissors, a shovel, ribbons, plaques, awards, bunting and other decorations. Get a list of these together well in advance of the event. We can all find scissors, but does your town sell red, white and blue flag bunting in January?

Make sure there are bathrooms nearby. If you're going to use the visitor center or campground restrooms, don't expect an extra 750 people to wait in line. Rent some porta-potties. And get some plumbing near them so people can wash their hands. And towels to dry them. And a trash can.

If you've set up special parking arrangements, make sure you've set aside adequate space for handicapped parking. Consider if there is adequate accessibility. Wheelchairs, for instance, do not belong only on the back row.

Make sure that medical attention is available. This means not just a first aid kit, but room for an ambulance to get to the event. Outdoor events might benefit from a tent or canopy so that guests or visitors can be protected from hot sun, rain or other inhospitable conditions.

8.7 After the event

Have refreshments — just coffee and lemonade might be enough. Make certain that any perishable food can be properly stored. If your visiting VIPs decide at the last minute that they'd like a tour, make sure you have transportation or escorts available.

Forward news clippings to your speakers, especially those from out of town who might not otherwise see the local paper.

Always follow up with thank you letters to participants, volunteers and visiting NPS staff.

After the last Dixie cups have been picked up, evaluate your efforts and ask what went right and what went wrong. Write up a simple report and offer it to other parks or the regional public affairs office. Your experiences, good and bad, may help other parks.

SECTION 9 — Commercial Photography

The NPS is the beneficiary of a great deal of commercial photography. Coffee table books, television specials, Web sites, travelogues and magazines depict national parks. For the most part, this is done in a positive way and helps us convey to the public why parks are important. There is no way the NPS could ever afford to buy this good "advertising" message. So while our park resources are wonderful in their own right, virtue is not its own reward. The Service must tell its story through the media, and to a large degree this will be done by commercial photographers, video producers, television directors, and Web site creators.

Detailed guidance for commercial photography and filming in national parks is contained in NPS-53. What follows are a few guiding excerpts:

- The NPS will not require a permit for still photographers, commercial or non-commercial, to go anywhere or to do anything that members of the public are generally allowed to go or do without a permit. This guidance, while issued by the Department of the Interior for still photographers, is generally applicable to videographers or cinematographers.

Photographic coverage — still, video or film — of breaking news never requires a permit, but is subject to conditions necessary to protect park resources and values, and to protect public health and safety.

- In most cases, the NPS has no control over the final use of an image. In fact, the photographer may not know how the image taken in a park will be used. However, we can stipulate that there be no implied or explicit NPS endorsement of a product or service without our permission. Regulations and directives relating to use of the NPS Arrowhead Symbol include CFR 36 (Part 11) and NPS Special Directive 93-7.

- We can require filming permits with a variety of requirements (insurance, time and place, etc.) when we believe they are necessary to protect park resources and values, and we can deny commercial filming access if our conditions are not met. There are also instances where we can recover costs, such as overtime for a ranger escort. These topics are covered in considerable depth in NPS-53.

SECTION 10 — What the Service Needs from You

The simple rule here is No Surprises. Restructuring didn't change this one. You expect it of your employees and the various levels up the chain of command expect it of you.

When significant incidents or issues arise, especially those that will subject the Service or the Department of Interior to public scrutiny, you need to make sure your actions and statements are coordinated with the regional and national leadership.

From the public affairs perspective, the faster the regional and, if appropriate, the national public affairs offices are brought into the discussion and planning, the less media and public perception crisis management will need to occur.

So what's needed? Here are four key items:

• **A quick briefing statement on the situation.** Doing it in writing helps keep everyone using the same facts, especially where numbers are involved. Date them so everyone knows if they've got the latest information. When time is of the essence, don't worry much about format.

• **News clippings.** The national and regional leadership most likely never see your local newspaper. If there's a significant story or editorial appearing in the hometown paper, fax it to the regional public affairs office. To help judge public interest and perception, it's important to know how different stories play across the country.

• **Photographs or video.** Sometimes even a thousand words won't make the same impression as a photograph or video clip. Your park may have a scanner or other technology that allows you to transmit photographs and video to other locations. Advance word. Planning a special event, or expecting problems such as a hurricane or protest?

• **Let the public affairs offices know what's coming and how they can help.** We're not big fans of surprises, either. Also, we can often bring a wider view in the planning process — for instance, knowing of scheduling conflicts elsewhere in the region, or how to contact reporters who are planning to be in your area.

10.1 *People Land & Water* and the *Arrowhead*

The WASO Office of Public Affairs is responsible for the gathering of news and information for the NPS section of *People Land & Water*, the official newspaper of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The National Park Service also provides content to the *Arrowhead* newsletter, which is published by the Employee and Alumni Association of the National Park Service.

Both *People Land & Water* and the *Arrowhead* provide a collation of news from around the Service — not assigned stories, but items that people and parks want to share. Your park's contributions are not just nice to have, they are a vital part of both publications. A version of *People Land & Water* is also on the DOI Web site at www.doi.gov/doipress. Together they form an excellent means of communicating news across the country.

The *Arrowhead* publishes news of interest to the Service, awards, employee moves,

employee and retiree deaths, births, weddings, and retirements. It recognizes significant park events, and covers a variety of items that a Service of 15,000 people might enjoy. The morning ranger report, distributed by e-mail, is a better place for rescues, car clouts, fires and other calamaties. Contributions are best sent by e-mail.

10.2 News Clippings

The WASO Office of Public Affairs is responsible for gathering newspaper or magazine clippings from around the country and presenting the most significant ones to the Directorate and the Department of Interior on a daily basis. Since they can't subscribe to all the papers in the country (think of the recycling load alone!) WASO depends on parks and regional offices to send in the most important items. Make sure to note the date of publication, the name of the publication and where it ran in the paper (A-1 might really get people's attention; page C-12 might not be a big deal.)

Many papers and magazines are now available on the Internet. Articles and pictures can often be downloaded for free and sent on as e-mail "clips." (Remember these are generally copyrighted stories, and you should not republish them without permission.)

Coordinate with the regional office and your cluster of parks so the region and WASO don't get four copies of the same thing, or miss an obvious story from a large publication.

Also look over the local papers for coverage of other parks' issues. These might be of interest to the WASO or regional office, but are almost always of interest to the park that is being written about. Mail or fax the story from your local paper; you're likely to get similar items in return.

10.3 Highlights

Highlights are items of interest that are happening in your park that might not have generated news coverage, but are worth knowing about and worth telling others about. These are things like upcoming dedications or community events, milestones such as your one millionth visitor, opening of key park facilities, partnership agreements, etc. The regional and WASO public affairs office can use this information in several ways. One is to prevent those surprises (you know the kind, when the Secretary of Interior's sister's neighbor turns out to be the mayor who cut the ribbon, etc.) These kinds of events are also used in crafting speeches and can be used in discussions with members of Congress if something good or bad happened in their home district. Regions have different procedures, but whether the word comes over the phone, via CCMail or fax, the point is to not keep good or bad news to yourself.

This advice goes not only for passing the word up and down the food chain, but should be followed inside the park or regional office. Too often there are good deeds or interesting activities (or just lessons to be learned) from work done right down the hall. A good park public affairs program will develop ways to pass those highlights around within the organization. The methods can take many forms — e-mail to employees, a newsletter that goes to all employees, bulletin boards, employee recognition events, etc. The form is less important than the substance.

NOTE: See Appendix 3 of this guide for instructions on accessing the NPS Infozone listserve. The listserve provides cc:Mail access to NPS Public Affairs staff nationwide.

SECTION 11 — Speeches

We've all heard horrible speeches. Too long, too much detail for the audience, too many umms, errs and disconnected thoughts. Unfortunately, many of us have been on the delivering side. So, what to do?

Speech writing is different than other writing. For starters, the project must begin with a topic suited to both the audience and the speaker. Unlike a newspaper essay or brochure, the audience can't just decide to put the text away (although they might drift off in the back row.) The content must be constructed to enhance delivery as an effective message.

First, it's essential to keep in mind the audience does not have the chance to re-read a passage that was not clearly understood. The speaker must make allowances for that fact.

The two principal devices used by speech writers are pauses and repetition. Speeches employ "heavy" punctuation. This extensive use of punctuation signals the speaker when to pause and for how long. These pauses let the audience catch up — giving a little extra time to absorb what's been said, and to set them up for what comes next.

Repetition is still a key to successful speeches. Remember, the audience lacks a text and must absorb the message purely from what is heard. So repeat key elements, varying the phrasing, but repeating the message.

Also, because the audience is working without a script, detailed information can fail to impress.

> **Wrong:** "Backwater National Monument had 489,143 recreational visits for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, according to our latest statistics."
>
> **Better:** "Nearly a half-million people visit Backwater every year; that's almost the whole population of Wyoming coming to your park."

Look over the advice presented in the Section 2. The hazards present in giving a speech are similar to those in giving an interview — things like careful pronunciation and carefully formulated thoughts are essential.

The speaker has some advantages not available to the interview subject. A scheduled speaking engagement affords the opportunity to review a speech text, and to practice giving the speech aloud with the clock running. That last bit of advice should not be considered optional — always read a speech aloud before delivering it to an audience.

A writing tip: In speech writing, a double-spaced page of average size print will take about two and a half minutes to deliver. Therefore, a 20-minute speech requires about eight pages. For delivering the speech, you may want to boost the type size for easier reading. Always number the pages.

SECTION 12 — Freedom of Information Act

The principle of the Freedom of Information Act is that citizens are entitled to know what their government is doing and can have access to documents explaining the actions of government. The Department of the Interior is very firm in support of both the letter and the spirit of the law.

Freedom of Information Act requests should be coordinated with the regional office's FOIA officer. In some cases, this is the public affairs officer. The regional director and solicitor must participate in any denial — full or partial — of a request. Similarly, delays in responding must be coordinated through the regional office and solicitor because requesters can treat delays as a denial and appeal your inaction to the Department.

If all of that sounds heavy handed, there is an elegantly simple way around the problem — disclose the information requested unless doing so will cause the government harm. The Attorney General in 1993 directed that agencies "apply a presumption of disclosure" when considering requests for documents. "Where an item of information might technically or arguably fall within an exemption, it ought not to be withheld from a FOIA requester unless it need be… I strongly encourage your FOIA officers to make 'discretionary disclosures' whenever possible under the act," said Attorney General Janet Reno.

Your regional FOIA officer most likely has a handbook on processing requests, as well as the most up-to-date opinions from the Solicitor's Office on how to handle certain requests. The handbook is also scheduled to be posted on the World Wide Web on the Department of Interior FOIA homepage during 1997. There are several basics, though, that we'll review below:

12.1 FOIA Basics

• **Response time.** You get 20 working days after receiving the request to reply. You are to supply the requested documents, or explain why you can't. In rare circumstances, you can take an additional 10 days to respond, but you must notify the requester of the delay and notify the regional FOIA officer.

• **Fees.** The FOIA regulations contain a fee schedule. If the fee is less than $15, don't charge because it's more costly to deal with the small check than it's worth. If a fee is going to be large, you can ask for written confirmation that a requester will pay. Be aware there are different fee schedules for commercial, media and private citizen requests. Also, fees can be waived when the request is in the public interest.

• **No new records need to be created.** But, you may find it easier to produce a new answer tailored to the request than generate hundreds of pages of copying. Being practical is encouraged!

• **Formats**. Amendments to the FOIA in 1996 allow the requester to dictate the form in which the documents are sent. For example, we may be asked to provide a database in Lotus 1-2-3 on a disk rather than handing over 200 pages of paper. If we don't keep a document in the requested format, we must put it in the requested format so long as it can be done with "reasonable effort."

• **E-mail/computer files.** The 1996 amended law makes clear that electronic records are subject to FOIA requests, and that we need to indicate in electronic records where deletions have been made (just like we do with a black marker pen on paper). We must also make reasonable efforts to search for records kept in an electronic form, including e-mail messages. As this goes into effect, FOIA officers, computer staff and solicitors will sort out how this is best done.

• **The Web.** The 1996 law, common sense and our technical capabilities dictate that more information be readily available to the public. Efforts by many parks to put planning documents, research work and other documents on the Internet are a good start.

• **Privacy.** While it seems that our privacy is routinely invaded by junk mail senders and others, we make serious efforts to protect individual privacy. This means we don't release Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, credit card numbers, birth dates, medical records, or home addresses or phone numbers. People are entitled to know certain information about federal employees, though. These include present and former position descriptions and duty stations, dates of federal service, pay grade and step, and training received at federal expense. Consult with your FOIA officer for the full list.

12.2 A Public Affairs Component

In cases where your regional public affairs person is not the FOIA officer, you may need to make an extra contact. Why? Because some FOIA requests are a good early indicator of where you'll have a significant media story or public involvement. The vast majority of FOIA requests are mundane and don't involve media or a public interest group. They are filed for things like personnel records by people who didn't get hired. But some topics could be of broader interest — a newspaper seeking concession records, requests for several case incident records regarding a particular ranger district, or requests for travel records. Who's asking and why must not influence our response; nevertheless, think about how they're likely to be used and give a heads up to the public affairs office if it seems like something that might result in further questions. (Remember the No Surprise request?)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Special Events Checklist

APPENDIX 2: Public Affairs Contacts

APPENDIX 3: InfoZone List Instructions

APPENDIX 4: Internet Listings for Electronic and Print Media, Environmental Organizations and Other Useful Resources

APPENDIX 5: Protocol In-depth

APPENDIX 1
Special Events Checklist

The following sample checklist does not necessarily include all details that must be considered in preparing for a special event, nor is every item listed necessary for every event. It is a reminder of the kinds of details that should be considered. Use it as the start of a planning document and assignment list.

ITEM	ACTION PERSON / NOTES
Airport Arrival	
Car(s) to pick up VIPs, guests and luggage	_____
Drivers	_____
Official greeting party or escorts	_____
Accommodations	
Hotel reservations	_____
In-park housing	_____
Gift baskets in rooms	_____
Briefing material in rooms	_____
Site Arrival	
Drop off location	_____
Greeting party from NPS (or others)	_____
Holding Room for VIPs / Guests	
Location	_____
Light refreshments	_____
Restrooms	_____
Seating chart	_____
Notify all of holding room location	_____
Other (changing area, props)	_____
Platform Requirements	
Platform dimensions adequate for guest #	_____
Platform placement (visibility, sun, etc.)	_____
Lectern	_____
Electricity needed?	_____
Arrowhead	_____
Flag(s) — DOI on the left; U.S. on the right	_____
Ice water and glasses	_____
Bunting and/or decorations	_____
Chair arrangement/seating chart	_____
Participants w/speaking roles	_____
Participants w/o speaking roles	_____

Appropriate sound system and mult box _____
Escorts in uniform to lead guest to platform _____

Audience
Estimated number _____
VIP section signs and ropes _____
Press section (including area for TV cameras) _____
Ushers _____
Chairs (number and arrangement) _____
Parking _____
Handicapped access issues _____
Restrooms (and hand washing) _____
Other _____

Rain/Weather Plan
Alternate site or date _____
Transportation between sites _____
Other variations _____
Tent/Canopy _____
Wind screens _____
Heaters _____
Umbrellas/rain gear for key guests _____

Formal Program
Prepared remarks _____
Music _____
Props/tools (shovel, scissors, etc.) _____
Written agenda with timing _____
Speaking roles
- Master of ceremonies _____
- Introduction of VIPs _____
- Remarks needed _____
- Guests _____
- Protocol considerations _____

A Groundbreaking
Who takes part? _____
Location of groundbreaking _____
Soften the ground first? _____
Where's the shovel(s)? _____
Something more creative than shovels? _____
Re-enact with various groups of VIPs? _____

Lunch/meals
Free refreshments or drinks? _____

Caterer? _____
Menu _____
Who pays? _____
Who eats? _____
Where/when? _____
Tables/chairs _____
Seating arrangements/protocol _____
Food storage/prep _____
Trash cans / recycling containers _____

Printing Needs

Invitations _____
Program design and wording _____
- Quantity _____
- Printer _____
- Printer's deadline _____
- Who pays? _____
- Delivery of finished product _____

Parking passes _____
Direction signs for parking, pedestrians _____
Folders for press kits/info packets _____
Photograph duplication _____

Parking

Quantity needed/available _____
Location (multiple sites?) _____
Identification needed? _____
Special areas
- Handicapped _____
- Platform Guests/other VIPs _____
- Media _____
- Work crew/caterer _____

Attendants _____
Traffic control _____

Media

Media advisory in advance of event _____
Press kit contents:
- Park brochure, map _____
- News release, program, biographies, speeches _____

Photographs of speakers _____
Press passes or permits _____
Utilities for press
Power, phone lines for fax, computer _____
Camera platform or location for cameras _____
Separate press conference area? _____

Coordination with other press officers
(Governor's press secretary, etc.) _____

First Aid

First aid station designated and prominently marked _____
Qualified staff _____
Supplies on hand _____
Ambulance service/route arranged _____
Location of nearest medical facility _____
Communications/radio frequencies _____

Miscellaneous Considerations

Overnight accommodations
Who needs them? _____
Reservations/payment _____
Transportation _____
Escorts for key guests _____
Tour guides (in park or through community) _____
Food for volunteers _____
Equipment for volunteers
(hats, armbands, badges, etc.) _____
Security needs _____
Nearby conflicts considered
(Jets departing during speech, road construction, etc.) _____
Other _____

Wrap Up / Follow Through

Cleaning of ceremony and parking sites _____
Return of property _____
Remove temporary facilities _____
Collect press clippings _____

Thank You letters
Participants, key NPS staff, volunteers _____

Close-out review/critique _____

APPENDIX 2

Public Affairs Contacts (revised 05/23/01)

Washington Office

David Barna, chief	202-208-6843
Elaine Sevy, deputy chief	202-208-6843
Fax	202-219-0910

Regional Offices	Contact	Telephone	Fax
Alaska	John Quinley	907-257-2696	907-257-2533
Intermountain	Rick Frost	303-987-6732	303-969-2785
Midwest	Flo Six	402-221-3448	402-341-2039
National Capital	vacant	202-619-7177	202-619-7062
Northeast	Edie Shean-Hammond	215-597-7989	215-597-0815
Pacific West	Holly Bundock	415-427-1320	415-427-1325
Southeast	Paul Winegar	404-562-3182	404-562-3263

Parks & System Support Offices

Location	Contact	Telephone	Fax
Blue Ridge Parkway	vacant	704-271-4779 x203	828-271-4117
Boston NHS	Sean Hennessey	617-242-5616	617-241-8323
Cape Cod NS	Mike Whatley	508-349-3785	
Cape Hatteras	Bob Woody	919-473-2111 x122	252-473-2595
Columbia/Cascade SSO	Nancy Stromsem	206-220-4015	206-220-4159
Denali	Jane Tranel	907-683-2294	907-683-9617
Denver Service Center	Donna Drelick	303-969-2825	303-987-6658
Everglades	Richard Cook	305-242-7714	305-242-7711
Gateway	Brian Feeney	718-338-3687	718-338-6284
Gettysburg	Katie Lawhon	717-334-1124 x452	717-334-1891
Glacier	Amy Vanderbilt	406-888-7906	
Glen Canyon	Charlotte Obergh	520-608-6208	520-608-6204
Golden Gate/Presidio	Tracy Fortmann	415-561-4730	415-561-4710
Grand Canyon	Maureen Oltrogge	520-638-7779	520-638-7815
	Sandi Perl	520-638-7885	520-638-7815
Grand Teton	Joan Anzelmo	307-739-3415	307-739-3419
Great Smoky Mts	Bob Miller	865-436-1207	865-436-1204
	Nancy Gray	865-436-1208	865-436-1204
Independendce	Phil Sheridan	215-597-1390	215-597-0042
Interagency Fire Center Boise	Roberta D'Amico	208-387-5239	
Lake Mead	Bert Byers	702-293-8947	702-293-8936
Lowell	Audrey Ambrosino	978-275-1705	978-275-1762
Mammoth Cave	Vickie Carson	502-758-2251	270-758-2349
Olympic	Barbara Maynes	360-452-0317	360-452-0335
Redwood	vacant	707-464-6101	
Rocky Mountain	Peter Allen	970-586-1363	970-586-1256
Santa Monica Mts.	Jean Bray	818-597-1036 x232	805-370-1850
Sequoia	Kris Fister	559-565-3131	559-565-3744
Shenandoah	Lynn Rothgeb	540-999-3300	540-999-3601
Southwest SSO	Cecilia Matic	505-988-6014	505-988-6013
Yellowstone	Marsha Karle	307-344-2015	307-344-2014
	Cheryl Matthews	307-344-2010	307-344-2014
Yosemite	Scott Gediman	209-372-0248	209-372-0371
	Kendell Thompson	209-372-0529	209-372-0371

APPENDIX 3
InfoZone List Instructions

This appendix provides instructions on how to join or leave the InfoZone listserve. The listserve, which is not open to the public, provides a cc:mail link to all subscribing members of the National Park Service Public Affairs community.

Majordomo commands should be sent in the body of an e-mail message to majordomo@www.nps.gov via the NP--INTERNET gateway.

Commands in the "Subject" menu are NOT processed.
It undersdtands the following commands:

subscribe <list>
Subscribe yourself to the named <list>
Example: subscribe infozone

unsubscribe <list>
Unsubscribe yourself from the named <list>
Example: unsubscribe infozone
who <list>
This command will return a list of all subscribed addresses
Example: who infozone

To send a message to all members of the infozone list you address your cc:Mail message to **infozone@www.nps.gov** via the **NP--INTERNET** gateway (do not send messages to majordomo@www.nps.gov as majordomo will only process commands). Create and send your message as you would any other cc:Mail message

If you have any question or problems, contact the NPS Webmaster via cc:Mail.

APPENDIX 4

Internet Listings for Electronic and Print Media, Environmental Organizations and Other Useful Resources

(Note: Web addresses are subject to change)

Electronic and Print Media:

http://www.gebbieinc.com/dailyint.htm
An Internet list with links to more than 700 daily newspapers.

http://www.gebbieinc.com/magurl.htm
Internet links to more than 1,200 magazines listed by subject.

http://www.gebbieinc.com/radintro.htm
Links to more than 3,000 radio stations across the U.S.

http://www.gebbieinc.com/tvintro.htm
Links to the web pages of more than 900 television stations.

http://www.gebbieinc.com/weekly.htm
Links to more than 700 weekly newspapers.

http://www.npr.org
Live, Real Audio broadcasts of National Public Radio programs.

http://www.c-span.org
C-SPAN web site offers live video of C-SPAN and C-SPAN2 television broadcasts. Daily program schedules and camera assignments are also posted here.

http://www.cnn.com
CNN's website offers live video of CNN broadcasts, and video of news stories. You'll also find text of news stories here.

http:/www.reuters.com
Up-to-the-minute, no frills news from around the world.

http://www.msnbc.com/news/default.asp
Video, audio and text clips of current news from MSNBC (NBC News).

http://www.abctv.com
ABC Television Network's website, with links to it's various news programs and newsmagazines.

http://www.cbs.com
CBS Television Network's website, with links to it's news programs and newsmagazines.

http://www.nytimes.com
The New York Times web site.

http://www.washingtonpost.com
The Washington Post web site

http://www.latimes.com
The Los Angeles Times web site

http://www.usatoday.com
USA TODAY web site

Environmental Organizations and Other Useful Web Resources

http://www.nationalparks.org
The National Park Foundation

http://www.npca.org
The National Parks and Conservation Association

http://www.nrpa.org
The National Recreation and Park Association

http://nature.org
The Nature Conservancy

http://www.sierraclub.org
The Sierra Club web site

http://animalconcerns.netforchange.com
Animal Concerns home page.

http://www.nwf.org
The National Wildlife Federation

http://www.loe.org
Links to tapes and transcripts from the radio program "Living On Earth."

http://www.fednet.net
Provides audio and video of selected Congressional hearings and White House briefings, live and archived.

APPENDIX 5
Protocol In-depth

Probably the most common question every public affairs officer gets when a special event is being planned is, "Who goes first when speaking?" The second most common question is usually, "On which side of the stage does the flag go on?"

Let's preface everything with the caveat that we treat everyone with respect and dignity and in the way we would like to be treated. So, even if we make a gaff in the expected line up most people will understand.

Still, there are proper answers to these questions and others. There are reference books as well, including Letitia Baldrige's, *Business Guide to Executive Manners.* Ms. Baldrige was social secretary to U.S. Ambassadors David Bruce, in Paris, and Clare Boothe Luce, in Rome, and was called to the White House to be Jacqueline Kennedy's Chief of Staff during the Kennedy Administration. She also advised four other First Ladies and has worked on many projects with the National Park Service in the White House. She revised the classic *Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette* and has written nine other books on manners and protocol. She also is a long time fan of the National Park Service.

We are privileged to have her professional assistance in this section of the *Superintendent's Guide to Public Affairs*.

Who does go first in the speaking line up?

The basic rule of thumb is lowest to highest in organization. What Park Service people usually mean with this question is, "How do I include multiple agencies, multiple governments, and private sector people on stage and in speaking order?"

Ms. Baldrige states that the first person to speak is usually the Master of Ceremonies. He/she opens the program by introducing himself/herself and by welcoming all the guests in the audience to the event. Then the VIPs in the front (or on the dais or whatever) are introduced, naming the least important (with title) first, and proceeding onward to the most important, and finally, to the main speaker. This introduction is not made until it is time for this person to actually speak. The audience should be asked to hold their applause until the last person has been introduced. The people being introduced should be instructed to give a friendly wave and stand up a second and sit down so that a large crowd can see the name with the face.

> "Take my advice and get a celebrity emcee," Ms. Baldrige says. "It sets a tone of immediate excitement for the audience, and makes him feel like a national hero."

She also recommends acknowledging the main speaker's family and children, particularly if you can make a presentation to the speaker. It will make a big hit at home and develops constituency.

For NPS-hosted events, this probably means starting with guests or park partners, then the smallest bureaucracy in this country (oftentimes it is the county officials), then state, then feds—the executive branch civilians first, then legislative branch delegates with Congressional Representatives in order of rank. If a Congressperson holds a major office, such as Speaker, then that person would speak in order of succession to the President, or in our case, probably last. Senators outrank Congresspeople, and thus are senior to Congresspeople and speak later in the program. Political appointees follow all of these including representatives of foreign governments, topped only by your keynote speaker.

Ambassadors from foreign countries outrank even U.S. Senators and Congressmen. They are representing their Head of State at your event. A Diplomatic List can be purchased from the Government Printing Office which has all the ambassadors listed in order of rank (the highest ones are those that have served in their posts the longest).

UN ambassadors are ranked behind the ambassadors who serve in Washington.

The listing of the VIP officials in the White House changes in their rank from administration to administration, at the pleasure of the President. If you have White House Special Assistants to the President coming, call the Social Office of the White House to find out who outranks whom. It is a lot of work, keeping this straight, but people's egos are at stake, so it is better to take the time and trouble to be correct.

Here's our example:

The staff at Mount Rainier National Park invited the state delegation to its centennial celebration. Also invited were the Vice President, who declined, the Governor and the District representative (who couldn't make it at the last minute), two sovereign tribal leaders, and the Director of the National Park Service.

The line up should have been—Governor, the newest delegate, oldest delegate, junior senator, senior senator, two tribal leaders, and the Director as keynoter. Had he come, the keynote role would have gone to the Vice President.

The park superintendent served as emcee and the line up became—Army Band, Army Color Guard, emcee, a tribal blessing, the Regional Director who provided a short historical context, the newest rep, the oldest rep who read a greeting from the Vice President, the only Senator who attended, the keynoter, followed by a tribal prayer.

You're right. That doesn't follow the smallest to the largest theory, but we asked all participants if our preferred line up was okay with them. The tribal members preferred doing the blessing and prayer. The Regional Director was only too happy to share history.

So, there is likely to be an exception to every rule. Make it simple—including your program. We have a terrible habit of making events too long. Get consensus if you're "going out of the box."

Where do you put staff representing a delegate who couldn't come?

Probably in the same spot as you would have the delegate.

Don't be afraid to suggest everyone limit their remarks. "People shouldn't have to listen to them more than 30 minutes max," Ms. Baldrige says. "The rest of the program should be entertainment, even if it is a magician, a monkey that plays the accordion, or a hot rock band from the local high school." You know for yourselves there is a squirm factor.

She suggests, if you want people to come to your events, don't allow more than three speeches—one 15 minutes max, one of 10 minutes max and one of 5 minutes max. Have the remarks from other dignitaries who want to be heard printed out in many copies and provided along with other press materials and PR things the NPS wants the guests to have. "Too many speeches are a crime," she adds.

Do not allow the NPS representatives to speak longer than the other representatives from the U.S. In many cases, the other representatives are in the executive branch and therefore ultimately our bosses. Congressional representatives are our guests. As good hosts, we defer to them.

We don't have a ceremony to hear us pontificate—we can have news conferences for that or we simply invite guests to our park's interpretive programs.

Figure out in advance of the special event who you are "playing to." Your ceremony could end up being strictly a media confab, it could be an opportunity to showcase something your Congressional representative has assisted with, or it could be directed at the park visitor. It could even be all of these things.

The more people you have to please in delivering a message, the tighter you need to make the speaking arrangements.

Which side of the stage does the flag go on?

The American flag goes stage right. That means if you are looking at the elevated platform, or the presentation area, the flag should go on the audience's left. On stage left, follow the lowest to highest rule. The Department of the Interior flag should go first and be seen more prominently than any other on that side. State flags come next (on the Interior flag's right when facing the stage) according to dates of admission, followed by any foreign flags. No flag should be higher than the American flag.

How do we arrange the stage seating?

Put names on the backs of chairs, not on the seats (you'd be amazed at how often those tags end up on the seat of the pants), in speaking order, with one exception: Keep the emcee as close to the microphone as possible. This means the one who speaks after the emcee should be seated the furthest from the microphone.

What does an emcee do?

Be prepared. Do homework. Read bios of speakers. Know why they're coming. Know why your audience would sit and listen to the speakers. Be ready to step in if the speaker is unable to fulfill or continue the role. Make sure there is water and lifesavers or breath mints available for all, either at the podium or at the chairs or tables (a good "stage manager" will make this happen). Make sure the emcee knows what is the park message for the event. The public will only see the emcee as the introducer. You know it takes practice to serve in that capacity. If it is our event, the emcee is likely to be our employee, unless we're able to find that celebrity. In any case, we will want a message delivered.

How do we refer to a Congressperson when writing an invitation (or writing place cards) to someone else for a reception honoring the delegate?

You are cordially invited to a reception honoring the visiting House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, or,

You are cordially invited to a reception honoring Mr. Norm Dicks, U.S. House of Representatives, or,

Your are cordially invited to a reception for the Honorable Wayne Allard, U.S. Senator.

Envelopes should be addressed as The Honorable Norm Dicks, House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20510, or,

The Honorable Norm Dicks and Mrs. Norm Dicks, House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20510.

The term "honorable" is a lifetime designation for most elected officials. Refer to *The Business Guide to Executive Manners*.

How do we address a Congressperson? Is it ever okay to call them by their first name?

According to Ms. Baldrige, "It is never okay to address a congressperson by his or her first name unless the audience knows that you and the congressman are old childhood friends or something equally powerful. Always address people like this, "Congressman Daniels, I'd like to present…," "Congresswoman Smith, I can't tell you how much we appreciated those last remarks of yours." After using their official title a couple of times, <u>then</u> you can call them Mr. Daniels and Mrs. Smith. It is like addressing Prince Charles as "Your Royal Highness" the first two or three times, and then calling him "Sir" from then on.

The informal nature of the NPS culture wants everyone to be friends and on a first name basis and to hug everyone. Resist the temptation! Always shake hands. Never hug.

How do we deal with international officials and dignitaries? How do we find out rank of international VIPs? How can we tell whether someone is a civilian or a political representative from another country?

Ban the word "deal." We host guests. We collaborate with people. We work with the media. We do not deal a blow to any of these people.

See comments about the speaking line up.

You might have to ask these questions of the staffer making the arrangements. Also ask whether the VIP speaks English or whether the person is traveling with an interpreter, or even a spouse. You will need to accommodate the others as you would the VIP.

Check with the NPS Office of International Affairs who may know if someone from a foreign country is traveling on official business.

Ranking? Consult the *Business Guide to Executive Manners*. If that doesn't say, ask. Start with the Regional Office of Public Affairs. See the section on page 1, Who Goes First in the Speaking Line Up. If you haven't gotten an answer before your event, be your usual polite NPS representative. We are honored at all times by international recognition.

We often forget that American Indian tribes are usually sovereign nations. They should be treated with the same respect as an international VIP. Our government-to-government relationship with the tribes is delicate. Seek first to understand the relationship our government has with the tribe. If you or the superintendent don't know, ask the NPS Native American Liaison Office in Washington.

The person may also be helpful in designing a role for the tribe at the ceremony. It would be a shame to banish the tribes to a cookie cutter role at each event. We tend to ask them to offer the blessing and prayer. It is an excellent role to share traditional values. It is also not the only role the tribes can play.

How do we address a consul, consul general, ambassador, even if they're our neighbors to the north and south?

Their title will work for a consul or consul general although in addressing invitations use either The Honorable Joe Smith or Consul General Smith. Ambassadors hold their title for life. Refer to them as Ambassador Joe Smith.

How are seating arrangements made for a VIP dinner?

There should always be a host at every table at an NPS function. Take your senior personnel and put one as a host at each table with the word "host" on a place card where he or she is to sit. Spouses can be pressed into service for this function, too, at a huge gathering. Hosts' duties consist of:

- introducing himself/herself to every person at the table
- going around the table and introducing all the guests to one another, giving their official titles, making them sound important, so that they will be glad they came
- giving a little talk on the NPS's most recent glories, projects, problems, and requests for assistance. In other words, an NPS pep talk.

If the NPS is hosting the dinner, we ought to have a "stage manager" that works behind the scenes so the officials can devote the entire attention on the group.

Alternate men and women unless there are unequal numbers. If anyone asks why they can't sit next to their spouses at one of your meals (never let them!), explain that they will meet interesting new people this way and have something to really talk about at night with their spouses. Explain that the NPS wants each one to spread his or her charm around to the "delight" of the other guests. If they still won't let you go on this, tell them "Tish Baldrige says it is incredibly tacky for spouses to be so insecure that they have to sit next to one another…the only exception is an engaged couple!"

It is always appropriate to ask the staffs of the VIPs how they would do it. It is also perfectly appropriate to seat people with those with like interests. The *Business Guide to Executive Manners* also has a "line up" which at first may not look applicable. For instance, the Chief of Naval Operations may be coming. That officer will have a comparable "rank" in the Department of the Interior. Refer to the organization charts in the Government Printing Office's *U.S. Government Manual*. You often can decide who among your guests is on the same level as the CNO.

What about speeches at dinner?

The best guidance is to make any speechmaking short enough so your guests won't fall asleep in their coffee cups. Follow the same guidance above for on-stage speeches. You ought to have a head table if you're hosting a speechmaking dinner. This avoids the tipping over of chairs or squeezing between tables when one is called to the podium. It also saves time.

Should we give documents to guests?

Would you want to carry around unsolicited papers for a long time? Provide papers on a requested basis at the time of the event. Better yet, give your guests an opportunity to brief themselves—send them background information beforehand.

What about gifts, especially with foreign diplomats and political personages?

Tough question for us civilians who have no access to an account with which to pay for such things. Still, it is often expected. We advise making arrangements with your cooperating association to make available selected books specific to your park site, or give items your park may produce as part of its interpretive tours.

Avoid giving food. Avoid items with a lot of writing—your guest may not speak English.

Park specific lapel pins work well.

It is okay to present a gift from you and the cooperating association paying for the gift.

How should you greet foreign dignitaries? Should you bow when a Japanese VIP does?

Greet foreign dignitaries the same way you would anyone else. Yes, the Japanese VIP will likely bow. That is the custom of the dignitary. It is not necessarily ours. Our custom is a warm greeting and often a firm handshake, which you may not find reciprocated. That's okay, but, as mentioned before, do not hug anyone.

The State Department often provides simple guidance for business people. Many corporate training organizations provide special classes. The NPS Office of International Affairs also has guidance, as well as Ms. Baldrige's books.

What about military protocol? We always seem to ask the same questions when new staff comes on board. How do we treat officers and where do they sit in ceremonies?

Refer to all officers up through the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Navy and Coast Guard as Mr./Ms./Miss (Never Mrs.)—anyone else by rank. Some may introduce themselves as Ensign Young, for example. Apparently that would be their preferred way to be spoken to—use it.

While the military may find this hard to believe, our superintendents are the same rank as, say, an Admiral of a ship or a General at a fort. Do not be cowed by anyone who suggests otherwise...unless, of course, it is a Pentagon official who will be equal to our staff in Washington.

They will sit in a ceremony as if we had ranks, unless the keynote speaker is a member of the Armed Services, in which case that individual will be the last to speak. If you end up with a group of officers all of the same rank, the one in rank longest is the most important. Our hats, though, may pose a problem at military hosted events. We do not shed them during the Pledge of Allegiance or the National Anthem. This is our uniform code. The military may do otherwise because it is military code.

Do we salute the flag?

Depends on who you ask in the NPS. Many believe hands over heart is the most solemn and recognizable honor anyone can pay to the flag. Others believe that in the military tradition, NPS uniformed employees should salute. Certainly this is true of the U.S. Park Police which has a protocol for saluting. We interviewed protocol experts who acknowledged that flag etiquette stimulates uniformed military personnel must salute. These experts recommend that any non military, and uniformed, group make a choice as a group and be consistent. And, for goodness sake, if you choose to salute, practice, and make it a snappy one.